



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 2 MAY 2022

	International	National	Regional and Local
<b>Events, Opportunities</b> <a href="#">Go to articles</a>	<a href="#">05/02 Day 68 of the Russia invasion</a> <a href="#">05/02 Denmark reopens embassy in Kyiv</a> <a href="#">05/02 Russia renews shelling Mariupol factory</a> <a href="#">05/02 Ukraine closes seaports; Russia control</a> <a href="#">05/02 Ukraine: drones sank 2 Russia patrol boats</a> <a href="#">05/02 UK plan: send asylum seekers to Rwanda</a> <a href="#">05/01 Day 67 of the Russia invasion</a> <a href="#">05/01 Ukraine war: spy satellites for hire</a> <a href="#">05/01 Mariupol civilian evacuations underway</a> <a href="#">05/01 Ukraine holds off Russia troops in east</a> <a href="#">05/01 Ukraine: Russia troops desperate to flee</a> <a href="#">05/01 Putin preparing Russians for NATO war?</a> <a href="#">05/01 Russia top military officer visits front line</a> <a href="#">05/01 Foreign fighters' deaths in Ukraine forces</a> <a href="#">05/01 Russia hardens occupation south Ukraine</a> <a href="#">05/01 Oligarch criticized the war; retribution swift</a> <a href="#">05/01 Shanghai residents fearful, angry</a> <a href="#">05/01 Italy, Greece relax Covid restrictions</a> <a href="#">05/01 Omicron subvariants trigger new wave?</a> <a href="#">05/01 China 'zero Covid' rules curb May 1 travel</a> <a href="#">05/01 China president behind zero-Covid fortress</a> <a href="#">05/01 May Day rallies in Europe</a> <a href="#">05/01 Germany May Day marches: Ukraine focus</a> <a href="#">05/01 Turkey: dozens detained May Day protests</a> <a href="#">05/01 Sri Lanka president faces May Day protests</a> <a href="#">04/30 Day 66 of the Russia invasion</a> <a href="#">04/30 Ukrainians suffer fuel shortages</a> <a href="#">04/30 UK: depleted Russia units regroup</a> <a href="#">04/30 Ukraine: Russia deploys new troops</a> <a href="#">04/30 Western artillery surges into Ukraine</a> <a href="#">04/30 Ukraine official: intentional ambiguity</a> <a href="#">04/30 Chechen fighters behind Bucha killings</a> <a href="#">04/30 Russia renews push, bombards Kharkiv</a> <a href="#">04/30 Russia: submarine cruise missile attack</a> <a href="#">04/30 Volunteers exhuming Kyiv region's dead</a> <a href="#">04/30 Ukrainian women train to clear landmines</a> <a href="#">04/30 Russia war strains economic cooperation</a> <a href="#">04/30 Sweden, Finland undecided joining NATO</a> <a href="#">04/30 Sunflower oil 'vanishes' amid Ukraine war</a> <a href="#">04/30 Poland vows wean itself off Russia energy</a> <a href="#">04/30 Open-source investigations into war crimes</a> <a href="#">04/30 Beijing shuts dine-in services</a> <a href="#">04/30 Global vaccine inequity due to racism</a> <a href="#">04/30 Saudi Arabia: Eid al-Fitr begins Monday</a> <a href="#">04/30 Mexico turns to UN; scarcity of medicines</a> <a href="#">04/30 'Rolling Thunder' protest rumbles in Ottawa</a> <a href="#">04/29 Economic growth slows to a crawl</a> <a href="#">04/29 Cracks emerge among Russia's elite</a> <a href="#">04/29 Suicides: 5 Russia businessmen 3mo.</a> <a href="#">04/29 China manufacturing activity plummets</a>	<a href="#">05/02 Bird flu locks down organic chickens</a> <a href="#">05/01 Covid cases rise with limited impact</a> <a href="#">05/01 Virus mutations are not slowing down</a> <a href="#">05/01 USTR: China illicit trade, economic theft</a> <a href="#">05/01 DHS preparing post-Title 42 migrant surge</a> <a href="#">05/01 Inflation reached a peak?</a> <a href="#">05/01 House speaker, delegation visit Kyiv</a> <a href="#">05/01 Calif. audit: 5 large police depts biased</a> <a href="#">05/01 Strong winds fuel New Mexico wildfire</a> <a href="#">05/01 Southwest braces extended wildfire season</a> <a href="#">04/30 Phoenix Ghost 'suicide drone' to Ukraine</a> <a href="#">04/30 Public schools' headcounts, budgets down</a> <a href="#">04/30 New Mexico: 1,000 firefighters battle wildfire</a> <a href="#">04/30 Recall: Ford Explorers</a> <a href="#">04/29 Covid deaths vaccinated elderly rising</a> <a href="#">04/29 Key inflation indicator rises to 40yr-high</a> <a href="#">04/29 FBI searches of US data collected by NSA</a> <a href="#">04/29 National Guard training for Ukraine restarts</a> <a href="#">04/29 Hurricane preparedness week: 1-7 May 2022</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Seattle May Day rally touts union strength</a> <a href="#">05/01 Lunar New Year festival sparks Seattle CID</a> <a href="#">05/01 Thurston Co. \$700K homeless hotel stays</a> <a href="#">05/01 USGS: 3.6mag quake shakes Mount Vernon</a> <a href="#">05/01 Portland police close cold case team</a> <a href="#">05/01 Understaffed Portland police struggle</a> <a href="#">04/30 Snohomish unvaxxed firefighters return?</a> <a href="#">04/30 Taxpayers pay Sound Transit fare evasion?</a> <a href="#">04/30 Grocery store workers approve 3yr-contract</a> <a href="#">04/29 UW forecasts 'normal' wildfire season</a> <a href="#">04/29 Firefighters prepare: busy wildfire season</a> <a href="#">04/29 Massive demand private security services</a> <a href="#">04/29 Hundreds Seattle students protest, walk out</a> <a href="#">04/29 Piecing together Seattle's tourism recovery</a> <a href="#">04/29 Sound Transit Eastside light rail faces delay</a> <a href="#">04/29 Spokane Valley ban: newspapers in city hall</a>
<b>Cyber Awareness</b> <a href="#">Go to articles</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Exodus: Russia tech workers flee</a> <a href="#">05/01 Russia struggles under hacking wave</a> <a href="#">05/01 Russia hackers target embassy emails</a> <a href="#">05/01 UK: Russia troll factory behind pro-war lies</a> <a href="#">04/30 Fake Windows 10 updates</a> <a href="#">04/29 Romania: govt. websites attacked</a> <a href="#">04/29 Finnish hotels' data compromised</a> <a href="#">04/29 Cyberespionage APT is 3 subgroups</a> <a href="#">04/29 Anonymous hacks Russia energy sector</a>	<a href="#">05/01 REvil ransomware returns</a> <a href="#">05/01 Attacks show 4chan is still a threat</a> <a href="#">05/01 Google fights doxing: new PII policy</a> <a href="#">05/01 Wall Street reluctantly embraces crypto</a> <a href="#">05/01 Rise of parental surveillance of the kids</a> <a href="#">04/30 Breastcancer.org suffers massive data loss</a> <a href="#">04/29 Scammers disguised as fraud busters</a> <a href="#">04/29 Update iOS, Android, Chrome right now</a> <a href="#">04/29 Russia cyber case prompted FBI queries</a>	<a href="#">04/29 Study: 650 in WA lost \$32M; catfish scams</a>
<b>Terror Conditions</b> <a href="#">Go to articles</a>	<a href="#">05/02 China's suicide terror problem in Pakistan</a> <a href="#">05/01 Iraq: missile attack targets oil refinery</a> <a href="#">05/01 ISIS bloody new chapter in Afghanistan</a> <a href="#">05/01 India: 62 militants killed in Kashmir in 2022</a> <a href="#">05/01 Iran-Taliban tensions rise, Afghan tinderbox</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Gitmo pretrial hearings USS Cole case</a> <a href="#">05/01 DHS confirms: 42 on watchlist at border</a> <a href="#">04/29 ISIS 'Beate' sentenced to life for murders</a>	

	<a href="#">04/30 Mossad in Iran foils IRGC plot</a> <a href="#">04/30 Pakistan airstrikes eastern Afghanistan</a> <a href="#">04/30 Egypt: IS militants blow up Sinai pipeline</a> <a href="#">04/30 Morocco aims to deradicalize IS veterans</a>		
<b>Suspicious, Unusual</b> <a href="#">Go to articles</a>	<a href="#">04/29 'Deep sea gold rush' irreversible harm?</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Climate change impact drinking well water</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Killeen TX mental health program unveiled?</a>
<b>Crime, Criminals</b> <a href="#">Go to articles</a>	<a href="#">04/30 Ukraine officials: Russia seizing grain</a> <a href="#">04/30 Ukraine: Russia looted museum artifacts</a> <a href="#">04/30 Hamas warns of global synagogue attacks</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Autopsy backlog plagues Mississippi</a> <a href="#">05/01 Stolen mail scheme targets D.C. suburb</a> <a href="#">05/01 Manhunt: Alabama prison official, inmate</a> <a href="#">05/01 Mississippi music festival: 5 shot, 1 killed</a> <a href="#">05/01 Virginia youth sports field shooting: 3 hurt</a> <a href="#">04/30 Motive of federal agent imposters unclear</a> <a href="#">04/30 Alabama prison official, inmate missing</a> <a href="#">04/30 Judge upholds Maxwell conviction</a> <a href="#">04/30 Jan 6 guilty plea: 2nd Oath Keeper</a>	<a href="#">05/01 Crackdown on repeat retail theft offenders</a> <a href="#">05/01 Courts mostly not using Tiffany Hill Act law</a> <a href="#">05/01 Portland: gunfire erupts amid truck convoy</a> <a href="#">04/30 Teen escapes juvenile detention; captured</a> <a href="#">04/29 Police investigate L&amp;I equipment theft</a> <a href="#">04/29 Murder trial for Auburn officer postponed</a>

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

## Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Ukraine holds off Russia troops in east</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/01/ukraine-military-switch-modern-weapons-hold-off-eastern-assault/2881651424590/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/01/ukraine-military-switch-modern-weapons-hold-off-eastern-assault/2881651424590/</a>
GIST	<p>May 1 (UPI) -- Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny, the commander of the Ukrainian military, said Sunday that the country plans to move to using modern weapons that meet NATO standards as experts said the country continues to hold off Russia's assault on its eastern region.</p> <p>Zaluzhny's comments were made in a telephone call with Gen. Mark Milley, the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The New York Times reported.</p> <p>The country has been relying on using Soviet-era weapons shipped from its allies and has received some weapons that meet NATO standards that have not yet made it into its defense effort.</p> <p>Milley on Saturday also spoke with Gen. Rajmund Andrzejczak, the chief of general staff in Poland, to discuss Russia's "ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the responses of the United States and Poland," according to a readout.</p> <p>The readout, provided by Joint Staff spokesman Col. Dave Butler, noted that the U.S. and Poland "continue to share a strong defense relationship and cooperate on a wide range of programs."</p> <p>The Institute for the Study of War, a thinktank based in Washington, D.C., said in an analysis update Saturday that troop reinforcements Russia recently sent to eastern Ukraine are "unlikely to enable stalled Russian forces to achieve substantial advances."</p> <p>The thinktank said that the reinforcements are "unlikely to enable Russian forces to break the current deadlock" because Russian attacks remain confined to two major highways "and cannot leverage greater numbers."</p> <p>Ukrainian forces have also made several successful counterattacks out of Kharkiv and recaptured a ring of suburbs that may "force Russian forces to redeploy units intended for the Iziurm axis to hold these positions," according to the thinktank.</p> <p>Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov on Sunday visited Yagidne and Lukashivka, two villages in the Chernihiv region that officials said had been liberated.</p>

The Institute for the Study of War predicted that Ukrainian forces may even be able to conduct wider counterattacks "in the coming days."

The Ukraine Defense Ministry said in a statement Sunday that Russia has sent weapons and military equipment by rail to its border with Ukraine from three of its military districts and its Northern Fleet.

"There is a threat that the enemy will launch missile strikes on military and civilian infrastructure throughout Ukraine from the territory of the Republic of Belarus, as well as provocations by the enemy on the specified section of the state border of Ukraine," the statement reads.

The ministry said that Russian forces on Sunday continued to carry out airstrikes and artillery fire on Kharkiv as their forces "strengthen" its offensive operations toward Izium.

Nine Russian attacks "have been repulsed" in the Donbas region, Ukraine's Defense Ministry said, and dozens of military vehicles including eight tanks were reportedly destroyed.

The military updates came as Ned Price, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said Saturday that the United States plans to start initial visits to Lviv this week in its plans to "as soon as possible" return diplomats to the country.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke today with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba to follow up on their April 24 meeting in Kyiv," Price said in a readout.

"The Secretary emphasized the United States' robust support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's brutal aggression."

Price added that Blinken and Kuleba also discussed the request the administration of President Joe Biden made to the U.S. Congress on Thursday for \$33 billion in security, economic, and humanitarian aid "to empower Ukraine to defeat the Kremlin's unconscionable war."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 Denmark reopens embassy in Kyiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/02/ukraine-Denmark-reopens-Kyiv-embassy/4221651481701/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/02/ukraine-Denmark-reopens-Kyiv-embassy/4221651481701/</a>
GIST	<p>May 2 (UPI) -- Denmark on Monday reopened its embassy in Kyiv after temporarily shuttering it at the start of Russia's war in Ukraine more than two months ago, officials said.</p> <p>Foreign minister Jeppe Kofod was present in the war-torn country for the ceremonial reopening of the embassy that included the hoisting of the Danish flag.</p> <p>"Touching to meet local employees and Danes who have been here in the capital the past two months," he tweeted.</p> <p>Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs added that it was Kofod who had the honor of raising his country's flag to mark the reopening.</p> <p>Denmark and several other nations closed their Ukrainian facilities after Russia launched its invasion of the country Feb. 24, though in recent weeks several of them have since reopened.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department said last week that it has begun to return diplomats to its facilities in Ukraine.</p> <p>"The increased U.S. presence demonstrates our support for Ukraine and is part of the U.S. commitment to return our diplomats out our embassy in Kyiv as soon as possible," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.</p>

	"This action will strengthen the department's ongoing commitment to facilitate humanitarian relief efforts and the delivery of assistance to the government of Ukraine, while providing enhanced support to U.S. citizens."
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 Ukraine closes seaports; Russia control</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-formally-closes-seaports-captured-by-russia-2022-05-02/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-formally-closes-seaports-captured-by-russia-2022-05-02/</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, May 2 (Reuters) - Ukraine has formally closed its four Black and Azov sea ports, which Russian forces have captured, the Ukrainian agriculture ministry said on Monday.</p> <p>The Azov Sea ports of Mariupol, Berdiansk and Skadovsk and the Black Sea port of Kherson were closed "until the restoration of control", the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>"The adoption of this measure is caused by the impossibility of servicing ships and passengers, carrying out cargo, transport and other related economic activities, ensuring the appropriate level of safety of navigation," it said.</p> <p>All Ukrainian seaports have suspended their activity as a result of the Russian invasion in late February. Russian forces captured some ports and blockaded others.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Monday Ukraine could lose tens of millions of tonnes of grain due to Russia's control of Black Sea shipping, triggering a food crisis that will affect Europe, Asia and Africa.</p> <p>"Russia does not let ships come in or go out, it is controlling the Black Sea," Zelenskiy told the Australian news programme 60 Minutes.</p> <p>"Russia wants to completely block our country's economy."</p> <p>Russia calls its intervention in Ukraine a "special operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from fascists. Ukraine and the West say the fascist allegation is baseless and that the war is an unprovoked act of aggression.</p> <p>Ukraine, a major agricultural producer, used to export most of its goods by sea but has been forced to switch to export by train via its western border or via its small Danube river ports.</p> <p>The ministry said last week Ukraine's grain exports had reached 45.709 million tonnes in the 2021/22, July-June season.</p> <p>It said the volume included 763,000 tonnes exported in April but gave no comparative figures. Senior agriculture officials said this month that Ukraine exported up 300,000 tonnes of grain in March.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 Russia renews shelling Mariupol factory</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/headline/mariupol-ukraine/2022/05/02/id/1068024/">https://www.newsmax.com/headline/mariupol-ukraine/2022/05/02/id/1068024/</a>
GIST	<p>Humanitarian organizations worked to evacuate more civilians from the devastated Ukrainian port city of Mariupol on Monday but hundreds of people remained trapped in the Azovstal steel works, the last stronghold of resistance to the Russian siege.</p> <p>A first group of evacuees was due to arrive in a Ukrainian-held town northwest of Mariupol on Monday. But Russian forces resumed shelling the steel works on Sunday as soon as the buses had left the plant, a city official said.</p>

People still stuck there were running out of water, food and medicine as Russian forces hemmed them into the industrial complex, whose network of bunkers and tunnels has provided shelter from weeks of Russian bombardment.

"The situation has become a sign of a real humanitarian catastrophe," Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

Intense Russian bombardments were also hitting towns in eastern Ukraine on Monday, causing severe damage, a regional governor said.

On the international front, EU energy ministers were due to hold emergency talks on Moscow's demand that European buyers pay for Russian gas in roubles or face their supply being cut off.

While the EU has imposed heavy economic sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine, the issue of Russian energy supplies has posed a dilemma that threatens to crack the united front.

## LOOKING EAST

The Russian military is now focusing on crushing resistance in Ukraine's south and east after failing to capture Kyiv in the early weeks of the war, now in its third month.

Its assaults have flattened cities, killed thousands of civilians and forced more than 5 million to flee the country. Mariupol, on the Sea of Azov, has become emblematic of the brutality of the war and the suffering of ordinary people.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces are now in control of nearly all the city, linking up Russian-held territory to the west and east.

Around 100 civilians evacuated from the Azovstal steelworks were due to arrive in the Ukrainian-held city of Zaporizhzhia, 230 km northwest of Mariupol, on Monday.

"For the first time, we had two days of a ceasefire on this territory, and we managed to take out more than 100 civilians - women, children," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in a nightly video address.

Footage from inside the steelworks showed members of the Azov regiment helping civilians through rubble and on to a bus.

But hundreds remain trapped inside. One older evacuee accompanied by young children said survivors were running out of food.

"Children always wanted to eat. You know, adults can wait," she said.

Russia last week said it had decided against storming the steel works and would instead blockade it. But sporadic bombardments have continued.

"Yesterday, as soon as the buses left Azovstal with the evacuees, new shelling began immediately," Petro Andriyushchenko, an aide to the Mariupol mayor, told Ukrainian television.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it was taking part in the evacuation operation along with the United Nations and Ukrainian and Russian officials.

More than 50 civilians arrived at a temporary accommodation center in Russian-controlled territory on Sunday after escaping from Mariupol, a Reuters photographer said.

'UNTIL VICTORY'

Moscow calls its invasion a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and rid it of anti-Russian nationalism fomented by the West. Ukraine and the West say Russia launched an unprovoked war of aggression that threatens to spiral into a much wider conflict.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday Moscow only wanted to guarantee the security of pro-Russian Ukrainians in the east and was not demanding that Zelenskiy surrender as a condition for peace.

"Our aim does not include regime change in Ukraine," Lavrov said in an interview published on his ministry's website.

Ukraine's military said on Monday Russian forces were trying to take over the eastern town of Rubizhne and prepare an assault on Sievierodonetsk.

Luhansk region Governor Serhiy Gaidai said three people had been killed by shelling over the past 24 hours.

The heaviest clashes were taking place around Popasna, to the west of the Russian-held regional capital. The shelling was so intense they could not even collect the bodies, he said.

"I don't even want to speak about what's happening with the people living in Popasna, Rubizhne and Novotoshkivske right now. These cities simply don't exist anymore. They have completely destroyed them."

Moscow is pushing for complete control of the Donbas region, where Russian-backed separatists already controlled parts of Luhansk and Donetsk provinces before the invasion.

In Russia, two explosions took place on Monday in Belgorod, a southern region bordering Ukraine, governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said. The cause of the blasts was not clear but the Kremlin has accused Ukraine of making cross-border attacks. Gladkov said there were no casualties.

#### EU PONDERES MOVES

In Brussels, EU energy ministers were due to meet in a bid find a way out of the dilemma posed by Russian energy supplies, which count for 40% of EU gas and 26% of its oil imports.

Germany and others have so far resisted calls for an abrupt halt to Russian fuel imports for fear of economic damage, while Moscow is demanding that European buyers pay for Russian gas in roubles or face their supply being cut off.

Russia halted gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland last week after they refused to meet its demand to effectively pay in roubles.

Diplomats said the EU is edging towards a ban on imports of Russian oil by the end of the year.

But German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Monday some countries were not yet ready for an embargo of Russian oil. Germany did not want to trigger an economic catastrophe, he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/02 Bird flu locks down organic chickens
SOURCE	<a href="https://money.usnews.com/investing/news/articles/2022-05-02/bird-flu-puts-organic-chickens-into-lockdown-from-pennsylvania-to-france">https://money.usnews.com/investing/news/articles/2022-05-02/bird-flu-puts-organic-chickens-into-lockdown-from-pennsylvania-to-france</a>
GIST	CHICAGO/PARIS (Reuters) - Organic and free-range chickens have been thrown into lockdown. Egg-laying hens that normally have access to the outdoors can no longer roam as freely or feel the sun on their

beaks as some U.S. and European farmers temporarily keep flocks inside during lethal outbreaks of bird flu, according to egg producers and industry representatives.

The switch comes as a surprise to shoppers already shelling out more money for eggs due to cullings of infected flocks. Consumers pay extra for specialty eggs, thinking they come from hens that can venture out of barns.

U.S. watchdogs say retailers and egg companies must do a better job informing customers that hens are kept inside, as shoppers track their spending amid record global food inflation. Keeping birds inside is safest for now, according to government officials, because a single case of bird flu results in entire flocks being culled. The virus can also infect humans, though experts say the risk is low. In France, where the government has temporarily required farmers to keep chickens indoors since November, some retailers are defying obligations to post clear information for consumers about the mandate, according to checks of grocery stores by Reuters. "I didn't know that they had to stay inside," said Josephine Barit, 34, a shopper at a small Paris store that had no indications hens may have been confined.

"So it's not really 'free range' anymore?" she said. "I suppose there is no other choice because of bird flu, but they could say so."

Allowing chickens time outside is thought to be more humane, giving consumers some peace of mind about buying animal farm products. Veterinarians say poultry with outdoor access are particularly vulnerable to becoming infected with bird flu, officially known as highly pathogenic avian influenza or HPAI, because migratory birds spread the disease. Poultry can fall ill from contact with infected wild birds, their feathers or feces.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends farmers keep poultry indoors "as long as the HPAI outbreak is ongoing," but has not required confinement.

#### DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS

The U.S. outbreak is the second-worst in history, with more than 35 million birds wiped out this year. France has culled nearly 16 million birds in its worst outbreak ever, while infections have also hit nations including Britain, Italy and Spain.

European requirements to confine chickens have left some consumers dissatisfied even when retailers post signs notifying customers of the change.

"At the end of the day you still pay the price of 'free range' or organic eggs when the fowls have actually never seen the sky," said Marc Dossem, 52, a shopper who spoke in a large supermarket in Paris.

EU and British marketing standards allow for free-range laying hens to be kept inside for up to 16 weeks before companies must issue advisories to customers.

Britain temporarily required eggs from "free-range" hens kept indoors to be labeled "barn eggs," but has allowed farmers to let hens outside again starting in May.

In Spain, hens must be kept indoors in special risk and surveillance areas of the country, said Mar Fernández, Spanish head of the Interprofessional Organisation of Eggs and Egg Products. They have not yet been indoors for more than 16 weeks, she said.

"There are countries that no longer have eggs from free-range hens available for months," Fernández said. U.S. authorities do not require organic egg producers to update labels when unexpected events like bird flu change production practices, the agriculture department said. Eggs labeled "organic" as well as "free range" must come from hens with access to the outdoors in the United States.

#### MISSING THE SUNSHINE



Among the suppliers now prohibiting outdoor access is Pete and Gerry's, which says it is the leading U.S. producer of organic, free-range and pasture-raised eggs. The business sells eggs in stores owned by Kroger Co and Amazon.com Inc's Whole Foods Market.

"We will be constantly evaluating the exposure risk and will have them back outside in the sunshine as soon as possible," Pete and Gerry's said.

Vital Farms Inc, another U.S. producer of pasture-raised eggs, said it confined hens after outbreaks in Europe. Both producers have information online about the switch, but their "free-range" and "pasture raised" labels remain the same.

Whole Foods, Kroger and Target Corp did not respond to questions about whether they would post notices for shoppers. "Consumers should get what they pay for and they're not getting the product as advertised," said Danielle Melgar, a food advocate for the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

Some European producers are resisting orders to confine poultry, despite the risks.

"Laying hens can be quite aggressive so we let them out a little bit every day or they will kill each other," said Emilie Ravalli, who runs an organic farm in Corcoue-sur-Logne in western France.

But barns can be comfortable, and chickens do not always go outside each day even when they are able to, said Gregory Martin, a poultry scientist at Pennsylvania State University.

"Confinement gives us safety," Martin said. "Only live birds produce eggs, so it's to our advantage to keep our birds safe."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Virus mutations are not slowing down</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/05/01/coronavirus-more-mutations/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/05/01/coronavirus-more-mutations/</a>
GIST	<p>During those terrifying early days of the pandemic, scientists offered one piece of reassuring news about the novel coronavirus: It mutated slowly. The earliest mutations did not appear to be consequential. A vaccine, if and when it was invented, might not need regular updating over time.</p> <p>This proved overly optimistic.</p> <p>The coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has had billions of chances to reconfigure itself as it has spread across the planet, and it continues to evolve, generating new variants and subvariants at a clip that has kept scientists on their toes. Two-and-a-half years after it first spilled into humans, the virus has repeatedly changed its structure and chemistry in ways that confound efforts to bring it fully under control.</p> <p>And it's not showing signs of settling down into a drowsy old age. Even with all the changes so far, it still has abundant evolutionary space to explore, according to virologists who are tracking it closely. What that means in practical terms is that a virus that's already extremely contagious could become even more so.</p> <p>"This virus has probably got tricks we haven't seen yet," virologist Robert F. Garry of Tulane University said. "We know it's probably not quite as infectious as measles yet, but it's creeping up there, for sure."</p> <p>The latest member of the rogue's gallery of variants and subvariants is the ungainly named BA.2.12.1, part of the omicron gang. Preliminary research suggests it is about 25 percent more transmissible than the BA.2 subvariant that is currently dominant nationally, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC said the subvariant has rapidly spread in the Northeast in particular, where it accounts for the majority of new infections.</p>



“We have a very, very contagious variant out there. It is going to be hard to ensure that no one gets covid in America. That’s not even a policy goal,” President Biden’s new covid-19 coordinator, Ashish Jha, said in his inaugural news briefing Tuesday.

He was answering a question about Vice President Harris, who recently tested positive for the virus and went into isolation. Harris had recently been boosted for the second time — her fourth shot of vaccine.

Her case highlights what has become painfully obvious in recent months: No amount of vaccination or boosting can create a perfect [shield against infection](#) from SARS-CoV-2. What the vaccines do very well, however, is greatly [reduce the risk of severe illness](#). That is hugely consequential as a matter of public health, as is the wider use of therapeutics, such as the antiviral [Paxlovid](#).

The vaccines currently deployed were all based on the genomic sequence of the original strain of the virus that spread in late 2019 in Wuhan, China. They essentially mimic the spike protein of that version of the virus and trigger an immune response that is protective when the real virus shows up.

But the variants that have emerged can evade many of the neutralizing antibodies that are the immune system’s front line of defense.

“It’s evolving at a fairly rapid rate,” said Jesse Bloom, a computational biologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. “I do think we need to aggressively consider whether we should update vaccines, and do it soon.”

BA.2.12.1 brings the novel coronavirus up another step on the contagiousness scale. Its close relative, BA.2, was already more transmissible than the first omicron strain that hit the country in late 2021.

And omicron was more transmissible than delta, and delta was more transmissible than alpha, and alpha was more transmissible than earlier variants that did not have the glory of a Greek alphabet name.

Most mutations are not advantageous to the virus. But when a mutation offers some advantage, the process of natural selection will favor it.

There are two fundamental ways that the virus can improve its fitness through mutation. The first could be described as mechanical: It can become innately better at infecting a host. Perhaps it improves its ability to bind to a receptor cell. Or perhaps the mutation allows the virus to replicate in greater numbers once an infection has begun — increasing the viral load in the person and, commensurately, the amount of virus that is shed, potentially infecting other people.

The other strategy involves the workaround of immunity. The human immune system, when primed by vaccines or previous infection to be alert for a specific virus, will deploy antibodies that recognize and neutralize it. But mutations make the virus less familiar to the immune system’s front-line defense.

The omicron subvariants keep coming: Scientists in South Africa have identified BA.4 and BA.5, which have mutations that were seen in earlier variants and are associated with immune evasion. Caseloads there are rising. [New laboratory research](#), posted online Sunday but not yet peer-reviewed, indicated that the emerging subvariants are adept at eluding the neutralizing antibodies seen in people who recovered from infections with the original omicron variant. The authors of the study concluded that BA.4 and BA.5 have the “potential to result in a new infection wave.”

“The evolution is much more rapid and expansive than we initially estimated,” said Michael T. Osterholm, a University of Minnesota infectious-disease expert. “Every day I wake up, I fear there will be a new subvariant that we will have to consider. ... We’re seeing subvariants of subvariants.”

Garry, the Tulane scientist, points out that mutations in the virus do not change its appearance dramatically. In fact, he said, even the heavily mutated variants don’t look much different from the

original Wuhan strain, or different from other coronaviruses that cause common colds. These are subtle changes.

Garry has a software program that allows him to create a graphic image of the virus, and even rotate it, to observe the locations of mutations and draw inferences for why they matter. On Friday, asked about BA.2.12.1, and why it is spreading, he noted it has a mutation, named S704L, that probably destabilizes a portion of the spike protein on the virus's surface. That essentially loosens up part of the spike in a way that facilitates infection.

This S704L mutation distinguishes this subvariant from BA.2.

The "704" refers to the 704th position for an amino acid on a chain of roughly 1,100 amino acids that form the protein. The S is one type of amino acid ("serine") seen in the original strain of the virus, and the L ("leucine") is what is there after the mutation. (The mutation is caused by a change in one nucleotide, or "letter," in the genetic code of the virus; three nucleotides encode for an amino acid.)

The virus is spreading today in the United States on an immunological landscape much different from the one it first encountered in early 2020. Between vaccinations and infections, there aren't many people entirely naive to the virus. The [latest CDC data](#) suggest the virus has managed to infect nearly 200 million people in the nation, which has a population of about 330 million. Among children and teenagers, about three out of four have been infected, the CDC estimates.

For the new CDC study, researchers looked at blood samples from thousands of people and searched for an antibody that is found after a natural infection, but not found after vaccination. The CDC concluded that the omicron variant managed to plow through the United States population during the winter almost as if it were an entirely new virus. The country by then was largely vaccinated. And yet 80 million people, approximately, became infected for the first time in that omicron wave.

On the family tree of this coronavirus, omicron is a distant cousin of delta, alpha and the other variants that had spread earlier — it came out of virologic left field. No one is sure of the origin of omicron, but many disease experts assume it came from an immunocompromised patient with a very lengthy illness, and the virus continued to use mutations to evade the immune system's efforts to clear it.

Omicron was mercifully less likely to kill a person than previous variants. But infectious-disease experts are clear on this point: Future variants could be more pathogenic.

As if mutation wasn't enough of a problem, the virus has another trick up its sleeve: recombination. It happens when two distinct strains infect a single host simultaneously and their genes becoming entangled. The recombination process is the origin of what's known as omicron XE. That recombinant probably emerged from a person co-infected with the original omicron variant and the BA.2 subvariant.

It was always possible in theory, but the identification of actual recombinants provides "proof of concept," as Jeremy Luban, a virologist at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, puts it.

The worst-case scenario would be the emergence of a variant or recombinant that renders current vaccines largely ineffective at blocking severe disease. But so far, that hasn't happened. And no "recombinant" has spread like omicron or other recent variants and subvariants.

This is the first catastrophic pandemic to occur in the age of modern genomic sequencing. A century ago, no one knew what a coronavirus was, and even a "virus" was a relatively new concept. But today, with millions of samples of the virus analyzed at the genetic level, scientists can track mutations virtually in real time and watch the virus evolve. Scientists across the planet have uploaded millions of sequences to the database known as GISAID.

Genomic sequencing has a major limitation in that, although scientists can track changes in the genome, they don't automatically know what each of those changes is doing to the virus. Which mutations matter

	<p>most is a question that can be discerned through laboratory experiments, modeling or epidemiological surveillance, but it's not always simple or obvious.</p> <p>Erica Saphire, president of the La Jolla Institute for Immunology, speculates that omicron has mutations that have changed the virus in ways not yet understood but which make it more resistant to antibody-mediated neutralization.</p> <p>"It may have acquired some new trick that we haven't uncovered yet," Saphire said. "It's harder to neutralize than I would have expected, based on the number of mutations alone."</p> <p>A reality check comes from Jeremy Kamil, associate professor of microbiology and immunology at Louisiana State University Health Shreveport: "These are all SARS-CoV-2."</p> <p>What he means is that these are all variations of the same virus, despite what seems like a tremendous amount of mutation. Correspondingly, someone who gets infected with one of these new variants has the same disease as people who got infected previously.</p> <p>"They got covid," he said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Hundreds Seattle students protest, walk out</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2022/04/29/72110837/hundreds-of-seattle-students-walk-out-demanding-better-treatment-of-survivors-of-sexual-assault">https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2022/04/29/72110837/hundreds-of-seattle-students-walk-out-demanding-better-treatment-of-survivors-of-sexual-assault</a>
GIST	<p>On Friday afternoon, hundreds of students gathered at Wallingford Playfield to support victims of sexual violence and call on the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) District to take action to do the same.</p> <p>During the sixth class period, a handful of student speakers, one after another, came up to a small podium surrounded by Lincoln High School (LHS) students to accuse SPS of "hand-waving," "gaslighting," and overall "failing" survivors of sexual assault.</p> <p>One speaker opened up about her past sexual assault and how she worries for her younger sister, who is now the same age she was when a life-altering experience left her "afraid to walk alone."</p> <p>"One thing I learned about Lincoln is they don't protect us. They give the assaulter more power than the victim. It's not fair that a three-day suspension is equal to a lifetime of fear."</p> <p>A group of high school students known as Lincoln Against Sexual Assault organized the rally in response to what they describe as a long history of SPS ignoring victims, but a recent incident was the straw that broke the camel's back.</p> <p>Earlier this month, a LHS student took to social media to accuse another student, who holds a student leadership position, of sexual assault. Student organizers said four other students levied accusations against the same student.</p> <p>According to an email from Principal Ruth Medsker to the LHS community, the administrative team handed the reported information to the district's Title IX Office, as is the district's policy. Since the alleged assault happened off-campus, SPS cannot investigate and the case is in the Seattle Police Department's hands.</p> <p>But some students want to see action from the school itself. On April 7, LHS students sent the administration an email that included a petition of over 200 sophomores' signatures, collected in just one day, demanding that the district's Title IX coordinator oversee the student's investigation. They also requested that the Class of 2024 Council move to administer a "vote of no confidence" to boot the accused out of office without interference from the administration.</p>

The students said they didn't want to debate the accused student's guilt and made it clear to signatories that SPD was still investigating. Still, the students wrote in the email that the petition demonstrates that "the Class of 2024 does not want someone accused of a crime—regardless of their guilt—to be the face of our class."

The petition did not land well with the Title IX coordinator, Natasha Walicki.

The following evening, Walicki responded: "The District takes these concerns seriously and has responded in line with SPS policies and procedures." She continued with a common move by school administrations – pointing out that the students' efforts to stand in solidarity with an alleged victim violates the district's Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) policy. Since the district has an "obligation to both alleged victims and alleged aggressors in ensuring we respond appropriately to concern," Walicki told the students to stop the petition and said that in her other role as the District's HIB Compliance Officer, she would be working with LHS for any "necessary next steps."

One organizer at the rally pushed back against the bullying accusations. He said, "This is not 'high school gossip,' this is serious," and that the adults left them no choice but to deal with it themselves.

Other area schools have followed the same playbook. When a student at a Bellevue high school accused another student of abuse last fall, she felt ignored by the administration, so her classmates rallied around her and staged a walkout. The school expelled the alleged victim and a handful of other seemingly random students involved in the walkout. Students from that school and LHS argued that punishing victims for dealing with trauma in a way that breaks a school policy further perpetuates a culture of silence around sexual assault.

While the accused LHS student resigned from his student leadership position last week, the incident highlighted what students see as an urgent need for the district to do better by victims and survivors. During Friday's rally, students presented four clear demands: consent training twice in high school, clearly outlined punishment for sexual assault, a designated person students can report sexual assault to, and a more positive environment for victims.

The student organizers said that the school agreed to work on some of their demands before they resorted to a walkout. As it stands, the high schoolers get one consent training, and the school is working on getting a second in partnership with the students.

As for the other demands, the students said the administration used "too much red tape" as an excuse. The students don't buy it.

One organizer said that when they protest, the administration treats them like children, placating them with empty promises. She said, "If we are old enough to be sexually assaulted, we are old enough to fight back when our human rights are stripped."

I asked SPS for a statement, and they responded with a copy of an email to LHS students. LHS Principal Medsker reiterated in the email that the school "takes student concerns around sexual misconduct seriously." The email also instructed students who participated in Friday's walkout to fill out a "civic engagement activity excused absence form."

"This is a large societal problem, and we are tackling this issue on many fronts in collaboration with students, families, and central office," wrote Medsker. "We appreciate your support as we navigate this complex issue."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/29 Hurricane preparedness week: 1-7 May 2022
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/get-ready-for-storm-season-hurricane-preparedness-week-is-may-1-7-2022/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/get-ready-for-storm-season-hurricane-preparedness-week-is-may-1-7-2022/</a>

Be ready for hurricane season. Today you can determine your personal hurricane risk, find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone, and review/update insurance policies. You can also make a list of items to replenish hurricane emergency supplies and start thinking about how you will prepare your home for the coming hurricane season. If you live in hurricane-prone areas, you are encouraged to complete these simple preparations before hurricane season begins on June 1.

The best time to prepare for a hurricane is before hurricane season begins on June 1. It is vital to understand your home's vulnerability to storm surge, flooding, and wind. Here is your checklist of things to do BEFORE hurricane seasons begins.

- **Know your zone:** Do you live near the Gulf or Atlantic Coasts? Find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation area by contacting your local government/emergency management office or by checking the [evacuation site website](#).
- **Put Together an Emergency Kit:** Put together a [basic emergency](#). Check emergency equipment, such as flashlights, generators and storm shutters.
- **Write or review your Family Emergency Plan:** Before an emergency happens, sit down with your family or close friends and decide how you will get in contact with each other, where you will go, and what you will do in an emergency. Keep a copy of this plan in your emergency supplies kit or another safe place where you can access it in the event of a disaster. Start at the [Ready.Gov emergency plan webpage](#).
- **Review Your Insurance Policies:** Review your insurance policies to ensure that you have adequate coverage for your home and personal property.
- **Understand NWS forecast products,** especially the meaning of [NWS watches and warnings](#).
- Preparation tips for your home from the [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#)
- [Preparation Tips for those with Chronic Illnesses](#)

Whenever a tropical cyclone (a tropical depression, tropical storm, or hurricane) or a subtropical storm has formed in the Atlantic or eastern North Pacific, the NOAA National Hurricane Center (NHC) issues tropical cyclone advisory products *at least* every 6 hours at 5 am, 11 am, 5 pm, and 11 pm EDT. Similarly, the Central Pacific Hurricane Center (CPHC) issues tropical cyclone advisory products for the central North Pacific *at least* every 6 hours at 5 am, 11 am, 5 pm, and 11 pm HST. When coastal tropical storm or hurricane watches or warnings are in effect, the NHC and CPHC issue Tropical Cyclone Public advisories every 3 hours. You can find these products on [www.hurricanes.gov](http://www.hurricanes.gov) for the Atlantic and eastern North Pacific or [www.weather.gov/cphc](http://www.weather.gov/cphc) for the Central Pacific; on TV, radio, and cell phones; and [NOAA Weather Radio](#). Information on NWS tropical cyclone watch, warning, advisory, and outlook products is detailed below. For more details on all NHC products, see the [National Hurricane Center Product User's Guide](#). Storm information and forecasts specific to your local area can be found from you local Weather Forecast Office (WFO) through [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).

When a hurricane threatens your community, be prepared to evacuate if you live in a storm surge risk area. Allow enough time to pack and inform friends and family if you need to leave your home.

- **Secure your home:** Cover all of your home's windows. Permanent shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8 inch exterior grade or marine plywood, built to fit, and ready to install. Buy supplies before the hurricane season rather than waiting for the pre-storm rush.
- **Stayed tuned in:** Check the websites of your local [National Weather Service office](#) and [local government/emergency management office](#). Find out what type of emergencies could occur and how you should respond. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or other radio or TV stations for the latest storm news.
- **Follow instructions issued by local officials. Leave immediately if ordered!**
- **If NOT ordered to evacuate:**
  - Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level during the storm. Put as many walls between you and the outside as you can.
  - Stay away from windows, skylights, and glass doors.
  - If the eye of the storm passes over your area, there will be a short period of calm, but at the other side of the eye, the wind speed rapidly increases to hurricane force winds coming from the opposite direction.



Please help the NWS spread the word about Hurricane Preparedness Week (May 1-7, 2022) on social media! Everyone is welcome to use the text and images provided below to help the NWS build a Weather-Ready Nation.

- [Hurricane Preparedness Week Kick-Off](#)
- [Sunday, May 1](#)
- [Monday, May 2](#)
- [Tuesday, May 3](#)
- [Wednesday, May 4](#)
- [Thursday, May 5](#)
- [Friday, May 6](#)
- [Saturday, May 7](#)

[Return to Top](#)

[Read more at NOAA](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 UK plan: send asylum seekers to Rwanda</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/02/world/europe/uk-asylum-rwanda.html?action=click&amp;algo=bandit-all-surfaces-variants-time-cutoff-30&amp;alpha=0.05&amp;block=trending_recirc&amp;fallback=false&amp;imp_id=231190742&amp;impression_id=04773589-c9f3-11ec-806c-1f6863098f0a&amp;index=0&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;pool=pool%2F91fcf81c-4fb0-49ff-bd57-a24647c85ea1&amp;region=footer&amp;req_id=852917883&amp;surface=eos-most-popular-story&amp;variant=0_bandit-eng30s">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/02/world/europe/uk-asylum-rwanda.html?action=click&amp;algo=bandit-all-surfaces-variants-time-cutoff-30&amp;alpha=0.05&amp;block=trending_recirc&amp;fallback=false&amp;imp_id=231190742&amp;impression_id=04773589-c9f3-11ec-806c-1f6863098f0a&amp;index=0&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;pool=pool%2F91fcf81c-4fb0-49ff-bd57-a24647c85ea1&amp;region=footer&amp;req_id=852917883&amp;surface=eos-most-popular-story&amp;variant=0_bandit-eng30s</a>
GIST	<p>FOLKESTONE, England — Nearly every day, Kamal Mohamad calls home to his parents in Iraq from the converted military barracks on the outskirts of Folkestone, a coastal town in Kent, southeastern England, where he is awaiting a decision on his asylum claim.</p> <p>But when he spoke to his parents two weeks ago, they were inconsolable.</p> <p>“My dad called me, he was crying,” Mr. Mohamad, 24, said. “He was so scared the government would send me to Rwanda, but I told him, don’t worry.”</p> <p>The British government’s announcement last month of a <a href="#">contentious plan to send some asylum seekers to the African country</a> has brought confusion and concern to many, like Mr. Mohamad, who arrived here on small boats that crossed the English Channel, or by other irregular means.</p> <p>It is still unclear whom the policy would affect or how the government would carry out its plan. Asylum seekers, many of whom fled war zones and then underwent dangerous journeys to reach Britain, say that the ambiguity is an additional burden that weighs heavily on them.</p> <p>Aid groups supporting asylum seekers, who are scattered across Britain in hostels, hotels and other temporary housing, emphasized that the new policy had deepened the uncertainty for people who were already in precarious situations. And even many local residents of Kent, where small boats carrying migrants often arrive after crossing the English Channel, say the plan seems unfair.</p> <p>Mr. Mohamad, who is Kurdish, arrived in England last year aboard a crowded dinghy. He is one of around 320 men seeking asylum who are currently housed in the former Napier Barracks in Folkestone.</p> <p>“I had no other options,” Mr. Mohamad said of his flight from Iraq. “We have so many problems in my country. We came just to stay alive.”</p> <p>Because he arrived before this year, Mr. Mohamad said he thought that it was unlikely the new policy would apply to him. But despite his reassuring words to his father, he acknowledged that he was worried. And he said many newer arrivals were very concerned about being sent to Rwanda.</p>

Katie Sweetingham, 39, the emergency response team leader for Care4Calais, an aid group that supports refugees, said that her organization had received dozens of frantic messages since the government's plan was announced.

"They already don't know what their future holds, but then you've got this horrible thing hanging over you," she said. "I think it's just another thing to traumatize people."

Ms. Sweetingham and 21 other volunteers monitor boat arrivals along the Kent coastline, greeting and offering hot drinks to people who come ashore. Care4Calais also offers support to those living in Napier Barracks and in other temporary accommodation.

"These are vulnerable people, and they are not a threat," Ms. Sweetingham said of the migrants.

In a statement, the Home Office said that the partnership with Rwanda would "overhaul our broken asylum system," adding, "There is nothing in the U.N. Refugee Convention which prevents removal to a safe country."

But international rights experts and groups representing asylum seekers say that the measures would indeed contravene that legislation, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the United Nations refugee agency, U.N.H.C.R., has denounced the policy.

So far, Britain's plan is short on detail, but it says that everyone who "comes to the U.K. illegally, or by dangerous or unnecessary methods" — including by small boat — since the start of this year will be considered for relocation to Rwanda.

The proposal has led to a backlash from lawmakers in the opposition, and even from [some in the governing Conservative Party](#). It has also reportedly [caused upheaval within the Home Office](#) and drawn [protest from senior civil servants](#). Opponents say that the policy would [fail to have the intended deterrent effect](#) and could be expensive for taxpayers.

Rights groups say that the plan is being used to score political points at a time when [Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure](#).

The policy is about the visibility of the migrants who arrive by boat "and the political capital to be made out of that visibility," said Steve Valdez-Symonds, the refugee and migrant rights program director for Amnesty U.K.

"All that is going to happen is that a relatively small number of desperately unfortunate people are going to be arbitrarily singled out to be expelled from this country to Rwanda, and goodness knows what may happen to them," he added.

Asylum seekers make up a small fraction of those migrating to Britain, and almost all of those who arrive by small boat claim asylum. Of all asylum applications, nearly two-thirds were [found to be genuine refugees](#) in 2021.

While [boat crossings have increased](#) in the past two years, asylum applications are [still down significantly](#) from a peak two decades ago. Migration experts say that is probably because of a shift in routes. Nonetheless, the boat arrivals have become a focus for the Conservative government.

The government backtracked on one immigration measure last Monday, withdrawing its [authorization to turn back boats](#) — a policy from last fall that never actually went into practice.

That move came after a legal challenge by several groups, including a union representing border officers who are tasked with carrying out the policy. Clare Moseley, founder of Care4Calais, which was also involved in the lawsuit, said that efforts were now underway to challenge the Rwanda policy, which she called "another staggeringly expensive exercise when we should be helping people."



On a recent Saturday afternoon, around 20 young men living in a hostel in London gathered in the basement of a church for games, snacks and English lessons organized by Care4Calais.

Most had fled war, political repression or persecution. They came from Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Sudan and Syria, among other countries. Some had come by boat. Some were smuggled in the back of trucks from Europe. Others arrived by plane with fake documents.

At one table, a volunteer was explaining the rules of Uno. At another, four men gathered around a game of Jenga, erupting in laughter when the wooden blocks tumbled.

One man at the gathering, Medhi, 31, an Iranian who asked that only his first name be used because of safety fears, described arriving in Britain three months ago by plane after fleeing persecution from his family for converting to Christianity.

Medhi shared a photograph of his back that showed severe wounds from lashes that he said his father had inflicted. Medhi said he was worried that the government would send him to Rwanda or back home.

“I fear for that decision,” he said of the possibility of being sent to Rwanda. “I want to stay here.”

Many local residents in Kent, even some whose perspectives veered toward anti-immigrant sentiment, said the Rwanda policy did not sit well with them.

“I don’t agree with them coming over here illegally, but then, once they come over here, the least we can do is help if we can,” said Kerrie Heath, 33, who was shopping in Folkestone. “They are just trying to get somewhere they can better their lives.”

Many adult asylum seekers spend months or years in temporary accommodation without the legal ability to work or go to school while their applications and potential appeals are processed.

Marc Elsdon, 41, a military veteran who was having a drink with his girlfriend in the refurbished harbor area of Folkestone, said that he was ashamed of the Rwanda policy.

“We are open to anyone trying to start a new life,” he said, noting that many of the migrants were fleeing war. “I am sure if it happened here, we would be going to another country for help.”

About 15 minutes from the coast, volunteers with the local charity Napier Friends chatted under the afternoon sun recently with a group of asylum seekers from the converted barracks, who were helping to plant a community garden.

Among a group shoveling soil was Zana, 28, from Iraqi Kurdistan. He, too, asked that his last name not be used because of safety concerns. Zana worked as an English teacher and was a translator for the coalition forces that fought the Islamic State in Iraq.

“My life was in danger there,” he said, describing being attacked for his work with the coalition. He tried to apply for a resettlement visa but that proved “impossible,” he said, so he arranged to be smuggled across Europe in the back of a truck, then to England by boat seven months ago.

Now, he says, he feels abandoned by the countries he spent years helping.

“I had a great life there, but I had to leave it,” he said of Iraq. “I expected a lot better here.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/29 Economic growth slows to a crawl
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/29/business/europe-economy-gdp.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/29/business/europe-economy-gdp.html</a>

Rising prices, fallout from the war in Ukraine and continuing supply chain chokeholds slowed growth around the world in the first months of the year and hobbled efforts by major economies to recover from the pandemic.

The latest evidence came on Friday, when the [European Union](#) said the 19 countries that use the euro grew only 0.2 percent overall during January, February and March compared with the previous three months.

One day earlier, the [United States](#) announced that its economy had shrunk 0.4 percent over the same period. [China](#), the world's second-largest economy behind the United States, reported signs of significant weakness this month as another wave of Covid-19 prompted widespread lockdowns.

"The overarching message is that the global growth outlook is souring, and it is deteriorating at a faster rate and in a more serious way than most analysts have anticipated," said Neil Shearing, chief group economist at Capital Economics.

There is significant variation in the causes, as well as the forecasts, among the three major economic blocs.

Although total output in the United States contracted, analysts tended to be more sanguine about the American economy's prospects, noting that consumer spending was strong despite high inflation and that the labor market remained tight. The downturn during the first quarter was most likely the result of one-time measuring quirks.

By contrast, China's report of 4.8 percent growth in the first quarter masks just how much that economy is suffering from a slump in the real estate industry, overinvestment and pandemic-related shutdowns.

As for Europe, it is much more affected by the war in Ukraine.

The common problem they all face, though, is inflation.

"Growth around the world is evolving at different speeds," said Gregory Daco, chief economist of EY-Parthenon, but "inflation is present almost everywhere in most sectors."

Those divergent economic backdrops may cause governments and central banks to choose different, or even conflicting, policies as countries try to slow inflation without tipping into recession.

In the United States, the [Federal Reserve](#) is set on raising interest rates to bring down inflation, Mr. Daco said, while governments in Europe may end up funneling more money to their citizens to blunt the impact of rising energy prices. And China, he said, is caught in a bind: "They do not want to let go of their Covid-zero policy, but they realize the drag on economic activity from that policy is massive."

Even though the current slate of risk factors — like the coronavirus and tensions between Russia and Ukraine — were all present when the year began, the economic outlook then was much brighter. Restrictions related to the Omicron variant of the coronavirus were beginning to ease in Europe and elsewhere, and there were hopes that the movement of goods and supplies around the world was about to pick up.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine injected a jarring level of uncertainty and undermined economic confidence. The war and resulting sanctions imposed by the United States, Europe and their allies have aggravated shortages of food, energy and crucially important minerals, disrupting trade and driving inflation to wince-inducing levels.

China's [economy](#) expanded in the first quarter but at a pace that was barely faster than the final three months of last year, underlining more trouble ahead. The government has responded to renewed outbreaks of Covid with severe lockdowns and mass quarantines, which have kept millions of workers and consumers in several cities at home. Shanghai, the country's biggest city, has been closed for more than a

month, while further shutdowns of businesses and residential complexes [were announced](#) in Beijing on Friday.

Patrick P. Gelsinger, the chief executive of Intel, the Silicon Valley giant, cited the Shanghai lockdown and the war in Ukraine in warning on Friday that the shortage of computer chips that has bedeviled technology, automotive and electronics companies worldwide for more than a year will continue “until at least 2024.” He made his remarks on a call with industry analysts.

Risks, especially those related to a possible energy embargo and other disruptions caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, have intensified. This week, Russia [cut off gas](#) supplies to Poland and Bulgaria. At the same time, the European Union has been [inching closer](#) to an agreement to stop the flow of Russian oil.

The impact of an [abrupt halt in](#) gas and oil supplies has generated sharp debate. In Germany, which has the largest economy in Europe, the central bank recently warned that a gas embargo would cause the country’s economic output to decline as much as 5 percent this year.

Some economists have offered more optimistic estimates, but Melanie Debono, senior Europe economist for Pantheon Macroeconomics, said a gas embargo would almost certainly throw Germany into recession and probably “drag the rest of Europe down with it.”

During the first three months of this year, Germany’s gross domestic product — the broadest measure of economic output — grew 0.2 percent.

“The economic consequences of the war in Ukraine have had a growing impact on the short-term economic development since late February,” the Federal Statistics Office in Germany said on Friday.

Across the eurozone, growth varied. The economy in Spain performed slightly better than other European countries’, growing 0.3 percent over the same period. Still, the improvement was much smaller than the 2.2 percent recorded in the last quarter of 2021.

In France, where Covid restrictions remained in place for much of the first quarter, growth came to a dead stop. In Italy, G.D.P. fell 0.2 percent from the previous three months.

“Clearly the picture for the first quarter is one of pretty weak growth,” said Ángel Talavera, head of European economics at Oxford Economics. “Consumer confidence has tanked everywhere pretty sharply,” he noted, adding that household spending weakened as wages failed to keep pace with inflation.

Average growth among the 27 countries that make up the European Union was 0.4 percent in the first three months of 2022, stated Eurostat, the European Union’s statistical office, twice the figure reported for the eurozone.

Inflation has been a persistent thorn, rising to an annual rate of 7.5 percent across the eurozone in April from 7.4 percent in March, Eurostat said.

Food and other prices rose sharply. Although energy prices fell 3.7 percent this month, they are still more than a third higher than last year. “There is a squeeze in real incomes for households,” Ms. Debono of Pantheon said.

Rising inflation could test the American economy’s resilience as well. During the first quarter of this year, consumer prices rose at a 7 percent annual rate, the fastest in four decades. Taking inflation into account, after-tax incomes dropped for the fourth quarter in a row.

Even before this latest round of measurements, intense uncertainty had dimmed forecasts. Last week, the International Monetary Fund revised its estimate of global growth to 3.6 percent from the 4.4 percent it predicted in January. Its estimate for the eurozone declined 1.1 points to 2.9 percent for the year.

	<p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine "will have severe economic consequences for Europe, having struck when the recovery from the pandemic was still incomplete," the I.M.F. said in its most recent regional outlook. "The war has led to large increases in commodity prices and compounded supply-side disruptions, which will further fuel inflation and cut into households' incomes and firms' profits."</p> <p>The outlook for the rest of the year may darken further.</p> <p>"Overall, 2022 is going to be a year where growth is going to be significantly weaker than most analysts expect," said Mr. Shearing of Capital Economics.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 DHS preparing post-Title 42 migrant surge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/dhs-secretary-alejandro-mayorkas-says-dhs-preparin/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/dhs-secretary-alejandro-mayorkas-says-dhs-preparin/</a>
GIST	<p>Homeland Security Secretary <a href="#">Alejandro Mayorkas</a> said Sunday <a href="#">his</a> agency is preparing to handle a possible daily flood of migrants when the Title 42 pandemic border shutdown is lifted later this month.</p> <p>DHS officials said earlier this year it could see as many as 18,000 migrants per day along the southern border after Title 42 gets lifted.</p> <p>"There is no question that if we reach that number that is going to be an extraordinary strain on our system, but we are preparing for it," Mr. <a href="#">Mayorkas</a> said on CNN's "State of the Union."</p> <p>The Biden administration is seeking to end the COVID rule, which has blocked millions of border crossings, on May 23.</p> <p>Mr. <a href="#">Mayorkas</a> said <a href="#">he</a> "respectfully" disagrees with Democrats that have criticized the administration's plan as too little too late.</p> <p>Mr. Mayorkas said his department has been working for "months and months" on a "multifaceted" plan in preparation for the change that includes directing more resources and personnel to the border and working with partners in Central America.</p> <p>"We are intensifying our efforts," Mr. Mayorkas said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "We are adding resources to it to address the potential for an increase in migration once Title 42 comes to an end."</p> <p>Mr. Mayorkas also threw cold water on the idea of resurrecting the Asylum Cooperative Agreements deals, also known as "safe third country" agreements, that the Trump administration struck with Central American countries to stem the flow of people across their territory en route to the U.S.</p> <p>The Biden administration rescinded those agreements, as part of its push to distance itself from Trump-era immigration policies.</p> <p>"I don't think there would be many experts who would consider Guatemala a safe third country," Mr. Mayorkas said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 USTR: China illicit trade, economic theft</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/china-doubling-down-illicit-trade-and-economic-the/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/china-doubling-down-illicit-trade-and-economic-the/</a>
GIST	<p>China's communist government is increasing its systematic theft of U.S. technology and intellectual property and conducting other illicit economic activities, according to the latest annual survey by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.</p>

Beijing's labor and environmental policies and anti-competitive subsidies have given the Chinese an advantage in world trade that is "putting companies out of business and violating concepts of fair competition," the USTR report said.

"We are clear-eyed about China's doubling down on its harmful trade and economic abuses," the report, made public last week, said. "We must recognize that China, as a large, non-market economy, has uniquely distorted global trade through its economic policies and practices, causing harm to U.S. production, investment, and even consumption."

Integration of the state-controlled Chinese economy into the global trading system "highlighted weaknesses in the current system — and the urgent need for reform," the report added.

The 312-page report argues that the Biden administration is realigning trade policies toward [China](#) to better protect the U.S. economy and is seeking to counter the illicit activities.

Despite four years during the Trump administration that focused heavily on countering Chinese technology and intellectual property theft from the United States, the problem persists.

A 2018 White House report said Chinese theft of technology and intellectual property cost the U.S. economy a staggering \$250 billion to \$600 billion annually. A Chinese Embassy spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Chinese Communist Party-affiliated outlet Global Times stated in an article Thursday that the USTR report was "filled with the same old lies."

"The report is meant to protect U.S. businesses, but in reality, it is aimed at nothing more than providing a pretext for the U.S. government to bully trading partners that it considers unfriendly and unwilling to bow to U.S. pressure," Global Times said.

China operates a program known as the "Thousand Talents Program" that seeks to entice U.S. scientists and academics to provide technology to China. The "Made in China 2025" program targets key economic goals such as artificial intelligence and driverless cars for special government support in global markets.

One of the most damaging cases, U.S. prosecutors say, involved Chinese national Tan Hongjin, who was convicted in 2019 of stealing an estimated \$1 billion worth of trade secrets from an Oklahoma-based petroleum company.

In another case several years ago, a Chinese government-owned company, Sinovel, stole proprietary source code used in controlling wind turbines from American Superconductor, a company in Massachusetts. The theft caused the company to decline in value from \$1.6 billion to \$200 million and to lose 600 of its 900 employees.

As a result of the theft, Sinovel is using the U.S.-developed source code to sell its wind turbines in the United States.

"The Chinese government steals staggering volumes of information and causes deep, job-destroying damage across a wide range of industries," FBI Director Christopher Wray said in February.

According to the USTR report, China continues to employ a wide variety of measures to support Chinese industries, including "various, often illicit, means to secure foreign intellectual property and technology to pursue its industrial policy objectives," the report said.

The report criticizes Beijing for what it says was a continuing failure to provide basic labor rights such as organizing and collective bargaining.

Beijing still employs forced labor in western China's Xinjiang Province, where ethnic Uyghurs have been repressed in what the State Department has labeled a genocide. As many as 2 million Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim group, have been held in forced labor camps, human rights groups say.

The report also criticized China for lax protections for intellectual property. "China needs to address weak enforcement channels and a lack of transparency and judicial independence," the report said.

For example, Chinese companies continued to use U.S. intellectual property after licenses had expired, while imposing foreign ownership restrictions and onerous licensing "to require or pressure technology transfer from U.S. companies."

"China's regime of technology regulations forces U.S. companies seeking to license technologies to Chinese entities to do so on non-market-based terms that favor Chinese recipients," the report said.

China's system also directs and facilitates systematic investment in and acquisition of U.S. companies to obtain cutting-edge technologies and intellectual property and ultimately transfer American know-how to Chinese companies. Beijing also "conducts and supports" covert intrusions and theft of U.S. companies' computer networks to obtain sensitive commercial information and trade secrets.

The report says the key to the Biden administration's effort to counter China are part of Mr. Biden's so-called Build Back Better agenda. The agenda appears to be faltering amid record inflation and opposition in Congress. The Commerce Department reported last week that U.S. GDP decreased by 1.4% annual rate in the first quarter of 2022, the weakest since the height of the pandemic in 2020.

The report states that the Biden administration wants to compete with China "from a position of strength," although few details of specific measures were presented in the report. The report states that strengthening supply chains will better protect from Chinese economic aggression.

"We are also considering all existing tools — and will potentially seek new ones as needed — to combat the harms of China's state-led, non-market practices," the report said.

Efforts begun under President Donald Trump since 2018 to consult with China on the problem "did not resolve the dispute" over intellectual property theft, the report said.

The report said U.S. engagement with China has been "demonstrating progress" since the signing in January 2020 of the U.S.–China Economic and Trade Agreement, the report said without providing specifics.

Regarding counterfeit products, the report said China is "home to widespread infringing activity, including trade secret theft, rampant online piracy and counterfeiting, and high-volume manufacturing and export of pirated and counterfeit goods to markets around the globe."

A total of 83% of all seizures of counterfeit merchandise by Customs and Border Protection came from China.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Italy, Greece relax Covid restrictions
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/tourists-rejoice-italy-greece-relax-covid-19-restr/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/1/tourists-rejoice-italy-greece-relax-covid-19-restr/</a>
GIST	<p>ROME — For travelers heading to Europe, summer vacations just got a whole lot easier.</p> <p>Italy and Greece relaxed some COVID-19 restrictions on Sunday before Europe's peak summer tourist season, in a sign that life was increasingly returning to normal.</p>



Greece's civil aviation authority announced that it was lifting all COVID-19 rules for international and domestic flights except for the wearing of face masks during flights and at airports. Previously, air travelers were required to show proof of vaccination, a negative test or a recent recovery from the disease.

Under a decree passed by Italy's health ministry, the country did away with the health pass that had been required to enter restaurants, cinemas, gyms and other venues. The green pass, which showed proof of vaccination, recovery from the virus or a recent negative test, is still required to access hospitals and nursing homes.

Some indoor mask mandates also ended, including inside supermarkets, workplaces and stores. Masks are still required on public transport, in cinemas and in all health care and eldercare facilities.

As of Sunday, visitors to Italy also no longer have to fill out the EU passenger locator form, a complicated online ordeal required at airport check-in.

"It was needed," said Claudio Civitelli, a Rome resident who was having his morning coffee at a bar near the Trevi Fountain. Until Sunday, patrons had to wear a mask to enter bars and restaurants, though they could remove them to eat and drink. "We have waited more than two years."

At a nearby table, Andrea Bichler, an Italian tourist from Trentino Alto-Adige, sat with similarly maskless friends.

"It's much better," Bichler said. "Let's say it's a return to life, a free life."

Public health officials say masks still remain highly recommended for all indoor activities, and private companies can still require them.

Even with the restrictions increasingly going by the wayside, public health officials urged prudence and stressed that the pandemic was still not over. Italy is reporting 699 cases per 100,000 inhabitants and is recording more than 100 deaths per day, with a total confirmed death toll at 163,500. But hospital capacity remains stable and under the critical threshold.

Given the virus is still circulating, "we should keep up the vaccine campaign, including boosters, and keep up behavior inspired by prudence: wearing masks indoors or in crowded places or wherever there's a risk of contagion," said Dr. Giovanni Rezza, in charge of prevention at the health ministry.

Italy was the epicenter of Europe's outbreak when it recorded the first locally transmitted case on Feb. 21, 2020. The government imposed one of the harshest lockdowns and production shutdowns in the West during the first wave of the virus, and maintained more stringent restrictions than many of its neighbors in subsequent waves.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 Day 68 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/02/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-68-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/02/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-68-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Some of the first evacuees from the besieged Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol are due to arrive in the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia on Monday morning, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said.</b> On Sunday <a href="#">around 100 civilians were evacuated</a> from plant, the last redoubt for Ukrainian forces in the city. Zelenskiy said he hoped that "all the necessary conditions" would be met to allow the evacuation to continue on Monday.</li><li>• <b>US House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, <a href="#">has become the highest-ranking US official to visit Ukraine</a> since the outbreak of war, where she met president Zelenskiy.</b> In a press conference afterwards, Pelosi said that the US would not be bullied. "If they are making threats, you cannot back down," she said. Pelosi was presented with the order of Princess of Olga medal by Zelenskiy.</li><li>• <b>Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov has denied that Russia is demanding the "surrender" of Zelenskiy as a condition for peace, or that Russia would attempt to claim</b></li></ul>



	<p><b>victory in Ukraine by 9 May.</b> “The pace of the operation in Ukraine depends, first of all, on the need to minimise any risks for the civilian population and Russian military personnel,” he told Italian broadcaster Mediaset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russia’s latest strikes, including on grain warehouses and residential neighbourhoods, “prove once again that the war against Ukraine is a war of extermination for the Russian army,”</b> Zelenskiy has said in his nightly address on Sunday, asking, “What could be Russia’s strategic success in this war?” The “ruined lives of people and the burned or stolen property will give nothing to Russia.”</li> <li>• <b>German chancellor Olaf Scholz has pledged to continue supporting Ukraine with money, aid and weapons, saying a pacifist approach to the war is “outdated.”</b> His remarks to a May Day rally in Dusseldorf were an implicit rebuke to a group of intellectuals, lawyers and creatives who condemned Russia’s war of aggression in an open letter, but urged Scholz not to send heavy weapons to Ukraine. Opposition leader Friedrich Merz is <a href="#">reportedly set to travel to Kyiv on Monday</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Pope Francis described the war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> as a “macabre regression of humanity” that makes him “suffer and cry”, in a Sunday noon address in St Peter’s Square.</b> “My thoughts go immediately to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, the city of Mary, barbarously bombarded and destroyed,” he said of the mostly Russian-controlled south-eastern port city, which is named after the Virgin Mary.</li> <li>• <b>The governor of the north eastern city of Kharkiv urged people not to leave shelters on Sunday due to intense shelling.</b> Posting <a href="#">on Telegram</a>, Oleh Synyehubov said: “In connection with the intense shelling, we urge residents of the northern and eastern districts of Kharkiv, in particular Saltivka, not to leave the shelter during the day without urgency.”</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s defence ministry has confirmed an attack on an airfield near Odesa on Saturday.</b> It said its forces had destroyed a runway and hangar at an airfield, which contained weapons supplied by the US and EU.</li> <li>• <b>A fire broke out on Sunday at a Russian defence ministry site in Belgorod,</b> close to the border with Ukraine, the region’s governor said, injuring one person. “On the the borders of three municipalities - Borisov, Belgorod and the urban district of Yakovlevsky - a fire broke out at one of the defence ministry’s facilities,” the governor of Russia’s Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said on Telegram.</li> <li>• <b>The European Union could phase out Russian oil imports by the end of the year, under the latest set of sanctions against Vladimir Putin’s war machine being discussed in Brussels.</b> The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, has said for weeks that the EU is working on sanctions targeting Russian oil, but the key question is how and when the commodity is phased out.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s online trolling operation is becoming increasingly decentralised and is gaining “incredible traction” on TikTok with disinformation aimed at sowing doubt over events in <a href="#">Ukraine</a>,</b> a US social media researcher has warned. Darren Linvill, professor at Clemson University, South Carolina, who has been studying the Kremlin-linked <a href="#">Internet</a> Research Agency (IRA) troll farm operation since 2017, said it was succeeding in creating more authentic-seeming posts.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 Ukraine: drones sank 2 Russia patrol boats</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-says-it-sank-two-russian-boats-as-new-blasts-hit-russian-border-city-11651482072?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-says-it-sank-two-russian-boats-as-new-blasts-hit-russian-border-city-11651482072?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine—Ukraine on Monday said it sank two Russian Naval vessels in the Black Sea with drone strikes, as explosions rang out once again in Russia’s border region of Belgorod and <a href="#">heavy fighting continued</a> in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukraine released video footage of what it said were Bayraktar TB-2 armed drones hitting the two Raptor-class patrol boats at 4.51 am Monday near Snake Island, a Ukrainian island that Russian forces captured on the first day of <a href="#">the war</a> on Feb. 24. Both boats appeared to be hit, but it wasn’t clear whether they have sunk.</p>

Ukraine's military said in recent days that it carried out several airstrikes on the strategic island, located 22 miles off the Ukrainian coast southwest of Odessa, destroying the air-defense system and other heavy weapons of the Russian military unit that occupies it. The two boats in the area, each capable of carrying 20 Marines in addition to three crew members, were likely to be carrying reinforcements and resupplies.

The island has heavy symbolic importance for Ukraine because its defenders refused to surrender—according to the Ukrainian version of events that has grown into a national legend—and radioed “Russian warship go screw yourself” when the Russian Black Sea flagship, missile cruiser Moskva, approached with an ultimatum on Feb. 24.

Moskva itself was [sunk by a Ukrainian missile strike](#) on April 14, with dozens of sailors still listed as missing by Russian authorities. Since the war began, Ukraine has also sunk a Russian landing ship, Saratov, and damaged at least another in a missile strike on the Russian-occupied port of Berdyansk on the Azov sea.

Taking the fight to the enemy by putting pressure on Russian supply lines inside Russia itself seems to have become a key part of Ukraine's effort to repel the Russian offensive. Russian forces Monday continued pressing into eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, with heavy fighting north of the town of Slovyansk.

Ukrainian officials said that in recent days they carried out a series of strikes on Russian forward bases in the Izyum area north of Slovyansk, killing senior commanders including a general. While this claim couldn't be independently confirmed, drone footage released by Ukrainian volunteers working with the military on Monday showed a series of precision strikes on a large grouping of Russian armor south of Izyum.

In Russia's Belgorod region, the staging ground for Russian attacks on Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv and the Donbas, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov posted on Telegram that he woke up early on Monday because of two loud explosions that rocked the city.

Mr. Gladkov later posted that the explosions had been caused by Russian aircraft carrying a combat mission and that the safety of residents was never at threat.

Videos posted by Belgorod residents to social media overnight appeared to show aircraft dropping flares in the night's sky while others featured the sound of loud explosions or sonic booms.

Incidents have repeatedly occurred in Russia in recent weeks, with explosions destroying Russian ammunition depots, fuel facilities and railway bridges in the border regions of Belgorod, Bryansk and Kursk that serve as the logistics bases for Russian forces attacking Ukraine.

On Sunday, Mr. Gladkov said a fire had broken out at a Defense Ministry facility in the region. One person had been wounded and seven houses damaged in the incident, he said. Footage posted by residents from the area showed thick plumes of smoke rising high into the sky, and the sound of what appeared to be secondary explosions from cooking-off ammunition.

Russia has accused Ukraine of sporadic attacks and acts of sabotage on its territory. Ukrainian officials have adopted a policy of not commenting on events on Russian territory, with Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak recently describing the explosions in Russian border regions as “karma” for Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

On Sunday, Roman Starovoit, the regional governor of Russia's Kursk region, said the partial collapse of a railway bridge in his region that day was an act of sabotage. “Specialists from law-enforcement agencies will investigate in more detail,” he said on Telegram, adding that there were no casualties.

The Russian Defense Ministry didn't immediately comment on the incident. Last month, Moscow warned that it would strike "decision-making centers" in Kyiv if attacks on Russian territory continued.

In recent days, two simultaneous fires erupted at an oil depot and a military fuel facility in the Russian city of Bryansk, also close to the Ukraine border. Before that, fuel depots exploded in Belgorod, as a result of what appeared to be a Ukrainian helicopter raid.

For the past few weeks, Kursk, Belgorod and other regions close to Ukraine have been under the second highest-level terrorist threat alert, which allows for military and police checkpoints to be established throughout the region and stepped-up patrols by security personnel, among other safety measures.

The U.S., fellow NATO members and other Western nations have stepped up their support for Ukraine by providing it with heavy weaponry, training and intelligence. In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have warned Moscow could hit back.

Some Western officials have interpreted Russia's decision to stop natural gas deliveries to Poland and Bulgaria last week as the biggest such retribution so far and warned that more countries that rely on Russian energy supplies could be targeted soon.

European Union energy ministers are meeting on Monday to discuss the fallout from that decision. EU members are scrambling to reduce their dependence on Russian gas imports by striking new contracts with alternative suppliers and taking measures to reduce gas consumption at home.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said late on Sunday that her country would support an EU ban on the import of Russian oil, confirming last week's reports about Germany's change of mind.

New oil supply contracts that have dramatically reduced Germany's reliance on Russian oil meant the country was now ready to withstand such an embargo, Ms. Baerbock told the ARD public-sector broadcaster late on Sunday.

Only 12% of Germany's oil imports currently come from Russia, down from 35% before the war, according to the government's latest assessment. Germany, the world's biggest importer of Russian gas, draws about a third of its gas imports from Russia, down from 55% before the war, but the government has said it would remain dependent on Russian imports until 2024.

Later on Monday, Ukrainian authorities were expected to welcome civilians evacuated at the weekend from the last Ukrainian resistance stronghold in Mariupol, the port city on the Azov Sea that has been under siege by Russian forces since the start of the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky tweeted on Sunday that 100 people who had taken refuge in an underground complex underneath the city's destroyed Azovstal steel plant were exiting under the supervision of the United Nations and would be taken to the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhya. He said more civilians would be evacuated.

Russia's Defense Ministry said later on Sunday that 80 civilians had been "rescued from the territory" through a humanitarian corridor during a temporary cease-fire. The civilians were taken to the village of Bezimenne in the Russian-held Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine and given accommodation, food and medical assistance, the ministry said. Evacuees who wanted to go to areas controlled by the government of Kyiv were transferred to representatives of the U.N. and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Defense Ministry said.

Vladimir Legoyda, a senior church spokesman, wrote on his Telegram channel that Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, was involved in organizing the exit of civilians.

Mr. Legoyda said the safe exit of the civilians was "a very important result of the negotiations undertaken with the participation of international organizations."

	A fighter from the Azov battalion holed up in the plant said that many more wounded soldiers needed immediate medical assistance and called for further humanitarian corridors.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Covid cases rise with limited impact</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-cases-rise-in-the-u-s-with-limited-impact-11651397401?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-cases-rise-in-the-u-s-with-limited-impact-11651397401?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>As <a href="#">new Omicron variants</a> further infiltrate the U.S., a jumble of signals suggest the latest increase in Covid-19 infections hasn't sparked a commensurate surge in severe illness even as risks remain.</p> <p>Covid-19 virus levels <a href="#">detected in wastewater in the Northeast</a>, the first region to see significant concentrations of the easily transmitted <a href="#">Omicron BA.2 variant</a>, appear to have flattened out in the past two weeks. Covid-19 hospital admissions have risen in the region, but they <a href="#">remain far below levels during earlier surges</a> that indicated widespread severe illness and taxed healthcare facilities.</p> <p>"This wave of Covid in the United States, in the places where it is, is not dangerous in a way that prior waves of Covid were," said Megan Ranney, an emergency physician and academic dean at Brown University's School of Public Health.</p> <p>The fast-mutating virus <a href="#">still poses risks</a>, she said. New York state is a hot spot for rising cases from another, even more easily spread <a href="#">version known as BA.2.12.1</a>. Wastewater levels nationwide have tripled since mid-March, according to data from Biobot Analytics Inc., though they pale in comparison to readings during the Omicron surge.</p> <p><a href="#">Counts of new cases</a>, though poorly tracked partly because so many people <a href="#">are now self-testing at home</a>, beyond the view of health departments, are still increasing. Cases have recently risen to a seven-day moving average above 55,000 a day, according to Johns Hopkins University, double the averages from early April.</p> <p>Hospitalizations, though muted, are edging higher and often lag behind case counts. The seven-day rolling average for confirmed and suspected Covid-19 hospitalizations recently topped 17,100, federal data show, up from an all-time, post-surge low of about 14,770 in mid-April. It is also a fraction of the more than 159,000 patients during the Omicron surge.</p> <p>Epidemiologists say the U.S. may have gained at least some temporary protection from the record-breaking wintertime surge triggered by an earlier version of Omicron in combination with protection from Covid-19 vaccines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week estimated the proportion of people in the U.S. with infection-induced antibodies <a href="#">jumped from 34% in December to 58% in February</a>.</p> <p>CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said last week that built-up protection from Covid-19 vaccines and prior infection is likely why hospitalizations are relatively muted so far. "We haven't seen them pick up as much as we might have expected in prior times during this pandemic, thanks to I believe a large amount of protection in the community," she said.</p> <p>The protective benefits of <a href="#">the Omicron surge</a> came with a price, including a peak in early February above 2,500 newly reported Covid-19 deaths a day. Most recently the U.S. has averaged about 350 reported deaths a day.</p> <p>The CDC on Thursday said New York is home to the 37 out of 54 U.S. counties that the agency says have high levels of Covid-19 community transmission. The BA.2.12.1 version that has been spreading there has a growth advantage of about 25% over the Omicron BA.2 variant, New York officials said. The CDC recommends donning masks in indoor, public settings in counties that are ranked high. Officials in the state have been <a href="#">reluctant to reimpose mask mandates</a>.</p>

	<p>“If our medical infrastructure is not in peril, it’s not an emergency,” said Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon, a Republican whose county includes the city of Syracuse.</p> <p>Federal officials and the CDC’s risk assessments are also moving to a place where they are more sharply focusing on hospitalizations, while still considering cases to some degree. “The goal of our policies should be, obviously minimize infections whenever possible, but to make sure that people don’t get seriously ill,” White House Covid-19 response coordinator Ashish Jha said Tuesday.</p> <p>Mild infections can sometimes cause longer-term symptoms and complications, some public-health experts said, and unmitigated spread increases the risk that the virus will mutate into something more sinister.</p> <p>The more transmission can be interrupted, the better for everyone, said Daniel Parker, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at the University of California Irvine. He said caution is warranted, even though recent infection increases appear to be more of a bump than a major wave.</p> <p>“We’re transitioning in how we’re dealing with the pandemic,” he said. “I hope that we’ll be nimble.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Russia hardens occupation south Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-occupation-of-southern-ukraine-hardens-with-rubles-russian-schools-and-lenin-statues-11651403176?mod=hp_lead_pos8">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-occupation-of-southern-ukraine-hardens-with-rubles-russian-schools-and-lenin-statues-11651403176?mod=hp_lead_pos8</a>
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine—Every day, convoys of cars and minivans trickle to a processing center on the edge of Zaporizhzhia, packed with civilians fleeing the areas of southern Ukraine under Russian occupation while they still can.</p> <p>A swath of southern Ukraine, including almost all of its Kherson region and the majority of its Zaporizhzhia region, have been <a href="#">under Russian military rule</a> since early March.</p> <p>Russian occupation authorities are swiftly integrating these areas into Russia, appointing collaborationist administrations and introducing Russian documents, education programs and currency. On Saturday, Russian authorities disconnected most of the occupied areas in southern Ukraine from Ukrainian cellphone service and internet providers by cutting fiber-optic cables and turning off power at base stations so as to hide “truthful information about the course of the war,” the Ukrainian government said.</p> <p>The biggest fear, especially among men, in areas under Russian control is that they will soon be forcibly drafted to fight other Ukrainians. That happened earlier this year to men up to the age of 65 in the parts of eastern Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions that <a href="#">Moscow has controlled since 2014</a>.</p> <p>“If they conscript you, and your family is left behind as hostages, what can you do? This was one of the main reasons why we got out,” said Mykola Murashko, 46, who drove to Zaporizhzhia on Wednesday with his wife and children from the Russian-occupied town of Vasylivka.</p> <p>Russian soldiers at the checkpoint were turning around people who admitted that they were heading to Ukrainian-controlled Zaporizhzhia city, he said. Mr. Murashko told them he was driving on business to another Russian-held village near the front-line. “Every morning for weeks, I kept waking up with the thought: let’s try to leave,” he said. “And today, we have made it.”</p> <p>Russian occupation authorities in southern Ukraine so far haven’t announced mobilization plans. But, signaling a comeback to Soviet-style totalitarian rule, they have started returning to central squares the monuments to Lenin that were dismantled by Kyiv after 2014. They have also removed and repainted Ukrainian symbols, flying Soviet flags alongside the Russian banner on public buildings.</p>

“The pressure on people has become systemic in recent weeks,” said the Ukrainian governor of Zaporizhzhia region, Oleksandr Starukh. “It really is like the Soviet Union is back over there, and people are forced to live in fear.”

Even though no agreed evacuation routes exist and people trying to escape have to brave shelling and crossfire, some 150,000 residents of the occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia region moved to [Kyiv-controlled parts of Ukraine](#) since the war began Feb. 24, out of an estimated prewar population of 700,000, Gov. Starukh said. An additional 100,000 people have fled via Zaporizhzhia from the devastated city of Mariupol, which is part of the nearby Donetsk region, he said.

Signs of Russia consolidating its rule are everywhere. Russian rubles became legal tender in the biggest Russian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, Melitopol, on Sunday, according to the Russian-appointed caretaker mayor there. The city-run wedding hall of the port city of Berdyansk, also in Zaporizhzhia region, has begun issuing newlyweds with Russian Federation wedding certificates.

The message from Moscow is that the occupied areas of southern Ukraine, which form a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014, will remain under Russian control forever.

“It’s out of the question to return the Kherson region back to Nazi Ukraine.... Kyiv will no longer be able to force its ugly Nazi policies upon our land,” the Russian-appointed deputy head of the military-civil administration of Kherson region, Kirill Stremousov, told Russia’s state news agency RIA on Thursday.

In a recent appearance on Russian state TV, Mr. Stremousov, a blogger originally from Donetsk region best known before the war for campaigning against Covid-19 vaccines, acknowledged that many residents of Kherson still expect the Ukrainian state to return—and therefore refrain from collaborating with his administration.

Peaceful pro-Ukrainian protests in Kherson and other occupied cities, a frequent occurrence in March, have fizzled out in recent weeks. “At first, the Russian intelligence services allowed these protests so they could see the structure of activist networks,” said Gov. Starukh. “But then, they detained the real organizers—either to beat them up, or to pressure them to leave to Ukrainian-controlled territory.”

Some pro-Ukrainian activists have been forced to go on Russian-controlled TV in occupied areas to repent for having participated in protests, and to call for collaborating with Russian authorities. Those who did so were released. Hundreds of others remain in detention.

“Every night when you go to bed, you expect they will come to pick you up. People who don’t live in occupied territories can’t understand how it is,” said a business owner from the town of Tokmak, Vitaliy, who crossed into Zaporizhzhia city so that his family could leave the region.

In the city of Enerhodar, part of the Zaporizhzhia region, occupation authorities are going door-to-door trying force business owners to reopen stores, restaurants, hotels and nightclubs, said a local businessman, Ivan. “They detain everyone who has money and keep them in their basements,” he said. “I know I’ve lost my business anyway, so I am not going to reopen for them.”

With the Russian crackdown making peaceful protests impossible, armed struggle behind Russian lines shows signs of emerging.

On Thursday, a major railway bridge on the line connecting Melitopol and Russian front-line positions to supply bases in Crimea was destroyed, in an operation claimed by Ukrainian special-operations forces. A handful of residents of southern Ukraine known to have collaborated with Russian forces were gunned down in recent weeks by unknown assailants, according to Ukrainian officials and local residents.

Almost all the elected mayors in occupied towns and villages of southern Ukraine have been replaced with Russian military appointees. The mayor of Kherson, Ihor Kolykhaev, was the last elected official to be removed, replaced on April 25 by a collaborationist member of the municipal council.



The Russians that day also named a former mayor of Kherson, Volodymyr Saldo, who served as a Ukrainian parliament member from the pro-Russian Party of Regions until 2014, as the head of the regional military-civilian administration. After the appointment, Mr. Saldo said that Russian-language schools would return, as will the system of education “that has been perfected in Soviet times.”

For both sides, education is a critical battleground. In Zaporizhzhia region, Ukrainian authorities have ordered the early closure of schools from May 2. Russian forces are trying to reopen schools as part of Moscow’s project to “re-educate” the residents of Ukraine and eliminate patriotic sentiment.

For Serhiy Oleksienko, a geography teacher, and his wife Tetiana, a primary schoolteacher, that pressure prompted them to pack all their belongings into a small trailer and leave their home in the Chernihivka district of the Zaporizhzhia region on Saturday.

“We had hoped we could hold out, but the psychological pressure is too much. We didn’t wait around to be forced to teach in Russian,” said Mr. Oleksienko.

A total of nine of Mr. Oleksienko school’s 16 teachers have also escaped to areas under Ukrainian control, he said. Their hometown, like others in southern Ukraine, has its share of pro-Russian collaborators, including the district director of education who is now working with the Russian authorities, Mr. Oleksienko said.

At the processing center outside a shopping mall in Zaporizhzhia, arrivals like Mr. Oleksienko are briefly questioned by police officers, who take photos of documents with cellphones and run names through databases. Investigators go from car to car to gather any evidence on Ukrainian officials collaborating with Russian occupation authorities. Under recently amended Ukrainian law, these collaborators face 15 years in prison. Those found guilty of treason can be sentenced to life imprisonment. Ukraine doesn’t have the death penalty.

On Friday, as Ukrainian policemen examined the passport of Zakhid, a native of Azerbaijan residing in the occupied town of Kakhovka, his wife Zemfira couldn’t hide her relief. Their journey to government-controlled Ukraine had taken two days, she said, with a night spent in a church in Tokmak and a close call when drunk Russian soldiers tried to confiscate their battered car. She left her bedridden father behind.

Civilians moving around Kakhovka must wear white armbands, the local shops are running out of food, and the pharmacies no longer have most medication, Zemfira said.

“We are like aliens in the city where we were born. We look at these Russian flags everywhere, at those white armbands. The Russians tell us there is no more Ukraine. How can it be?” she shook her head. “This morning, at the crossing, when we saw our Ukrainian flag for the first time, we just couldn’t help crying.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Ukraine war: spy satellites for hire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-puts-spy-satellites-for-hire-in-the-spotlight-11651410002?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-puts-spy-satellites-for-hire-in-the-spotlight-11651410002?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>AURORA, Colo.—Ukrainian forces hunting Russian tanks and tracking troop movement are being aided by imagery from a growing number of commercial spy satellites, giving Kyiv access to intelligence once the domain of only a few governments.</p> <p>Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>’s attack on his neighbor has coincided with a boom in the number and sophistication of commercial surveillance satellites, with hundreds now in orbit. Company officials say they are streaming data to the U.S. and allied governments, sometimes directly to Kyiv authorities to aid them in repelling <a href="#">Russia’s invading force</a>, as well as to humanitarian groups to help them map the chaos and evacuate civilians.</p>



Even before [Russian troops poured into Ukraine](#), satellites detailed the Kremlin's plans. When Mr. Putin said his troops massing at the border were pulling back, satellites showed the opposite, and that Russia had built [a bridge from Belarus](#) for tanks to cross a river into Ukraine. "No one knew to look at that area," [Planet Labs PBC](#) co-founder and Chief Executive Will Marshall said.

The imagery provider, which is working with the Pentagon and others, was able to spot the bridge because its fleet of roughly 200 satellites scan all of Ukraine once a day, Mr. Marshall said. The company's satellites have a resolution of around 9 feet, a measure of the level of detail the sensors can image, and can spot changes on the ground.

It isn't just optical imagery being gathered. Some satellites can see through clouds and track Russian troop movements at night, industry officials said. Still others scoop up electronic signals that can be used to [track Russian forces](#). The data from commercial spacecraft may not be as high-quality as those the latest U.S. spy satellites can reap, but they can be easily shared without the encumbrance of security restrictions.

The data from these commercial spy satellites are now an integral, if often informal, part of the conflict, providing Ukraine with valuable intelligence it can use to battle Russian forces, but also in shaping public opinion by exposing civilian destruction and potential war crimes.

Senior U.S. national security officials and industry executives say affordable satellites for hire have transformed the war, making it harder for Russia to hide or dissemble about its military actions. Since so much information is already public, it has also [made it easier](#) for U.S. intelligence agencies to declassify and share some of their own secrets.

"Commercial geospatial data is to the war in Ukraine what GPS was to Desert Storm 30 years ago," said John Serafini, CEO of HawkEye 360, referring to the U.S. military's use of satellite navigation for precision operations in the 1991 conflict. HawkEye 360, one of many satellite startups still in their first decade, has a constellation gathering radio-frequency signals from space.

Satellites have also been used to track [refugee flows](#) and spot [mass graves in Ukraine](#), industry officials said.

The advent of spy satellites dates to the early days of the space race. Months after the Soviet Union in 1957 launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik, which transmitted radio signals, then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved plans for the U.S. to develop and launch spy satellites. Images from those early spacecraft had a resolution of roughly 25 feet.

Four decades of government monopoly began to change with the launch, in 1999, of the Ikonos satellite, a commercial earth-imaging spacecraft that offered users resolution as good as about 3 feet.

In the early years of commercial imaging satellites, customers still were largely governments, according to industry officials. That started to shift as more earth-imaging satellites were launched and users became more familiar with what they could provide, and spacecraft showed greater detail, said Stephen Wood, a senior director for [Maxar Technologies](#) Ltd., which has four operational satellites in orbit.

Maxar, which has been a leading provider of Ukraine imagery to the media—including The Wall Street Journal—during the Russian invasion, uses cameras that take images with a resolution down to 12 inches. The company can reposition onboard cameras to collect [imagery of what's happening on the ground](#) across a larger area, including border regions with Ukraine, Mr. Wood said.

While government intelligence agencies once viewed commercial spy satellites with suspicion, they are now eager customers.

U.S. government spy satellites cost billions of dollars each and can take years to build and deploy. Commercial spy satellites are relatively cheap and can fill gaps.

The U.S. government is encouraging private companies to share their haul, Navy Vice Adm. Robert Sharp, director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which collects, analyzes and distributes data from U.S. spy satellites, said in an interview.

The commercial industry has “been an important aspect of our government being able to have the right information, the right classification at the right time,” he said at GEOINT, an annual space-intelligence conference.

Industry executives said Ukraine, with its notoriously tricky weather, is a perfect proving ground for a space technology that has been commercialized only recently: synthetic aperture radar, which can peer through clouds, fog and snow.

Space technology company MDA Ltd. said it has a contract with a commercial U.S. space partner. The imagery it collects is merged and analyzed with that gathered by other companies. Those intelligence reports are then shared with the Ukrainian government.

“Ukraine is a tricky place and has a lot of cloud cover and night operations,” MDA Chief Executive Mike Greenley said. The company owns one radar satellite and the Canadian government a constellation of three. They can detect where vehicles have moved, even in bad weather, and spot tanks hiding under trees, he said.

The company can image Ukraine daily, Mr. Greenley said, and the images can be ready to view in some cases in less than 15 minutes.

Adm. Sharp said the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency—perhaps best known to the public for constructing a model of Osama bin Laden’s Abbottabad compound in Pakistan based on space imagery—has increased its resources dedicated to Ukraine. Private firms say they have done likewise.

Brian O’Toole, CEO of BlackSky Technology Inc., said that days after Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion, the company decided to change the planned orbit of two imaging satellites that would be launched April 2 so they would cross over Ukraine more frequently. That required rejigging the rocket launch and securing U.S. government approval to modify its launch license, he said.

Imagery of Ukraine was delivered to customers within 24 hours of the launch, the company said.

HawkEye 360 deploys a different set of sensors. Its satellites gather and pinpoint radio-frequency signals from space—anything from illegal fishing vessels to emergency beacons. As Mr. Putin’s troops surged into Ukraine from the north and then pulled back after failing to take Kyiv, HawkEye’s spacecraft followed them by tracking the Russian forces’ jamming of GPS signals, Mr. Serafini said in an interview.

The commercial operations aren’t without risk, however, and many companies declined to be specific about how they are assisting Ukraine in its effort to fend off Moscow’s assault. One executive said he feared his firm could become a target for Russian cyberattacks.

Adm. Sharp said his agency has seen no disruption of U.S. government or commercial imaging satellites.

The Pentagon has declined to provide details on “commercial satellite imagery services” that were included as part of a package of security aid to Ukraine announced April 14.

Some companies are openly promoting what they are doing for Ukraine, however.

Satellogic, an earth observation company which began in Argentina, is providing space imagery directly to the Ukrainian government, as well as free data to humanitarian groups such as the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, said Thomas VanMatre, vice president of global business development. “If you’re helping the cause, we send you a login and credentials,” he said.

	<p>The company has partnered with the Halifax International Security Forum, a nonprofit, to raise \$10 million to provide Ukraine with dedicated time on satellites passing over its territory, instead of relying, as it does now, on what governments and companies provide it. The Forum says it has raised about \$100,000 so far.</p> <p>Planet Labs' Mr. Marshall said the impact of commercial imagery goes well beyond Ukraine: Governments can no longer get away with large-scale military activity without everyone knowing.</p> <p>"We're moving to a transparent and accountable era through these technologies," he said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Russia top military officer visits front line</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/russian-general-dead-valery-gerasimov.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/russian-general-dead-valery-gerasimov.html</a>
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — The chief of the general staff of the Russian military, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the country's highest ranking uniformed officer, made a visit to dangerous front-line positions in eastern Ukraine late last week in an effort to "change the course" of Russia's flagging offensive there, according to a senior Ukrainian official. Two U.S. officials with knowledge of the visit also backed that assessment.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials learned of the visit, the Ukrainian official said, but not in time to catch General Gerasimov. When Ukrainian forces launched an attack on one position visited by General Gerasimov, at School No. 12 in the Russian-controlled city of Izium on Saturday evening, he had already departed for Russia. Still, some 200 soldiers, including at least one general, were killed, the Ukrainian official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive military operation.</p> <p>Two U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential intelligence assessments, confirmed that General Gerasimov had been in eastern Ukraine for the past couple days, but had no information about the attack on the Russian base. The Russian Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>"Our working assumption is that he was there because there's a recognition they haven't worked out all their problems yet," said one of the officials.</p> <p>The presence of such a high-ranking official on the front lines is highly unusual and comes amid what Western military analysts describe as increasing disarray within Russian forces. Even with dramatically scaled down objectives, Western officials and analysts say the Russian military continues to struggle with logistical problems and coordination among its troops, while facing persistently fierce resistance from the Ukrainians.</p> <p>Izium, a medium-sized city in eastern Ukraine, has become a base of operations for the Russian military as it pursues an offensive meant to wrest away the two eastern Ukrainian territories bordering Russia that make up the region known as the Donbas. The successful seizure of the area would represent a consolation prize for the Kremlin, after an embarrassing withdrawal from the region around the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, which, according to U.S. intelligence assessments, the Russian leadership had expected to fall within days of invasion.</p> <p>But even in the east progress has been slow. Russian forces have been able to make incremental gains, day by day, taking some villages, while losing others, as strongly entrenched Ukrainian troops put up stalwart resistance.</p> <p>General Gerasimov sits at the right hand of Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, and is one of only three people, along with the president and the minister of defense, who were principally in charge of plotting the course of the war from its outset. This strict hierarchy that defines Russia's military leadership is one reason Western analysts say Russia's forces have so often appeared unable to adapt quickly to changing battlefield conditions.</p>

For more than a month after the war started, Russian forces lacked a battlefield commander who might guide the action from inside Ukraine, leading to poor coordination among different units and services that has contributed to the deaths of thousands of troops. It also led to the deaths of 10 or more generals who had moved into front-line positions to try to untangle the mess.

Early last month, the Kremlin finally appointed [a seasoned commander](#), Aleksandr V. Dvornikov, who was accused of ordering airstrikes on civilian neighborhoods in Syria, to oversee forces on the ground in Ukraine.

American officials said General Gerasimov's secret visit to the eastern front underscores the problems Russian forces are confronting in the Donbas.

"It likely means things are not going well for the Russians," Representative Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee and former Army Ranger, said in a telephone interview from Poland after visiting Ukraine on Saturday with Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"They've had thousands killed in action, troop morale is low, and, very significantly, their offensive in the south and east appears to be stalled," Mr. Crow said.

General Gerasimov had been in eastern Ukraine for several days and arrived on Saturday during the day at School No. 12, which was being used as a base by Russia's Second Combined Arms Army, as well as airborne forces deployed to the region, the senior Ukrainian official said. According to preliminary information gathered by Ukrainian forces, Maj. Gen. Andrei Simonov, who was among the commanders at the base in Iziun, was killed in the attack.

"The decision to destroy this object was taken not because of Gerasimov, but because it is an important base of operations," the official said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Seattle May Day rally touts union strength
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-may-day-rally-and-march-tout-new-union-strength/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-may-day-rally-and-march-tout-new-union-strength/</a>
GIST	<p>Bolstered by a series of successful, high-profile union campaigns across the country, Seattle's annual May Day march for workers' and immigrants' rights experienced a resurgence Sunday, drawing a sizable and buoyant crowd.</p> <p>After two years of slimmed-down crowds amid pandemic lockdowns, more than 200 May Day marchers packed the streets, striding from Judkins Park to downtown Seattle. Their demands were wide-ranging: immigration reform, ending evictions, divesting funds from police departments and halting the sweeps of homeless encampments, among other reforms.</p> <p>Fueled in part by recent union victories for workers at Amazon and Starbucks — two corporate giants headquartered in Seattle — some marchers credited the crowd size to a renewed optimism for workers' rights.</p> <p>"We're tired of living under the constant threat of losing our jobs," said Stephen Hoth, an Uber and Lyft driver and member of the Drivers Union. Hoth moved to Kent from Nebraska four months ago after Uber abruptly deactivated his account, he said.</p> <p>"Imagine Uber is your only source of income and they just get rid of you," he said, snapping his fingers, "just like that."</p> <p>Hoth and a group of drivers marched for the expansion of protections for drivers. Other demonstrators participated to support a broad spectrum of progressive stances.</p>

“It’s housing, it’s homelessness, it’s immigration, it’s a number of topics beyond just labor driving this turnout,” said Yesenia Gonzalez, a program coordinator with El Comité, a social justice organization that sponsored the march to celebrate International Labor Day.

Still, organizers frequently pointed to labor wins during the march: a successful strike by farmworkers in Skagit Valley ahead of the popular Tulip Festival; Seattle Starbucks workers voting to unionize; and mobilization efforts at a handful of local workplaces.

In speeches met with boisterous applause, organizers called for more support for the state’s most vulnerable workers whose fears have been fanned by inflation, economic uncertainty and an ongoing pandemic.

Marchers clutched signs that rebuked capitalism and corporate union-busting (like a “Fight Bezos” sign admonishing the Amazon founder).

“Billionaires are living a totally different life than the average worker,” said Vishnu Subramaniam, an organizer with the Washington branch of the Service Employees International Union. “That’s a huge driving factor: the economic inequality.”

The group chanted, “Respect Us. Protect Us. Pay Us.” And, “Si’ se puede,” the motto of the United Farm Workers of America. The demonstration started at 1 p.m. with participants reaching Westlake Park in downtown Seattle around 5 p.m.

Although turnout outpaced last year’s march — with dozens joining the throng of 200 as they made their way downtown — it didn’t rival the size of the closely packed crowds that have rallied in the pre-pandemic days, Gonzalez said.

And the havoc wreaked by groups of violent protesters during past May Days also was absent this Sunday. In the past, anti-capitalist protesters have blended into the crowd before peeling off to smash building and car windows and carry out other acts of vandalism. By midday, the display was largely peaceful, with Seattle police officers scattered along the route, hemming in marchers.

Police didn’t block the streets for the demonstration, a departure from how the city managed May Day marches of years past. Instead, organizers used cars and bicyclists to stop traffic and make way for the march.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 USGS: 3.6mag quake shakes Mount Vernon
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/weather/earthquakes/magnitude-36-earthquake-mount-vernon-usgs/281-c65b7d1d-af07-473f-96d2-ee7fb9b1e726">https://www.king5.com/article/weather/earthquakes/magnitude-36-earthquake-mount-vernon-usgs/281-c65b7d1d-af07-473f-96d2-ee7fb9b1e726</a>
GIST	<p>MOUNT VERNON, Wash. — A magnitude 3.6 earthquake struck Sunday morning about 1 mile east of Mount Vernon, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.</p> <p><a href="#">According to the USGS</a>, the earthquake happened early Sunday morning at a depth of about 8.4 miles (13.5 km).</p> <p>Reports on Twitter indicate some residents felt the earthquake this morning and were awakened.</p> <p>Numerous reports also came into the KING 5 newsroom describing shaking and loud explosion noises.</p> <p>There were no immediate reports of damage.</p> <p>In 2021, parts of <a href="#">Skagit County were shaken by numerous earthquakes</a>. A remote Skagit County valley was hit with 17 earthquakes in a little over a week. These earthquakes hit near Mount Josephine, about six</p>

	<p>miles north of Hamilton. There were some small quakes recorded under Mt. Josephine in 2003, but those may not be connected to the ones in 2021.</p> <p>The Darrington–Devils Mountain fault zone runs east to west between Mount Vernon and Darrington, forming the northern boundary of the Everett basin.</p> <p>Washington residents and visitors have access to an additional early earthquake warning tool already used in Oregon and California.</p> <p><a href="#">MyShake</a>, a mobile app funded by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), was made available in January for Washington residents and visitors.</p> <p>The MyShake app is available for free through the Apple App Store and GooglePlay for Android phones.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Lunar New Year festival sparks Seattle CID</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/lunar-new-year-festival-sparks-reawakening-for-seattles-chinatown-international-district">https://www.q13fox.com/news/lunar-new-year-festival-sparks-reawakening-for-seattles-chinatown-international-district</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - The Year of the Tiger brought hundreds of people together in Seattle's <a href="#">Chinatown-International District</a>. The community celebrated a festival recognizing the Lunar New Year on Saturday.</p> <p>"Today's celebration is kind of a reawakening for a lot of communities," said David Leong, owner of Northwest Kung Fu and Fitness School.</p> <p>The Lunar New Year Festival was the first big event in the CID since pre-COVID-19. The festival was delayed from earlier this year because the number of positive cases was high. As the crowd grew at Saturday event, people weren't just celebrating the new year, but also being amongst community and helping bring the neighborhood back to life.</p> <p>"I can feel the energy of everyone just kind of revitalizing the area once again. And it feels like everyone is just in this together, and they're moving forward and trying to past what we've been going through," said Cal, who attended the festival in cosplay with friends.</p> <p>"COVID has been really hard with our kids. Just being in a sense of community and being around their own age and people in general. So, having him to see so many people, somewhat normal again, is new for him," said Icha Stephanie, who attended the event with her family.</p> <p>February 1 marked the Lunar New Year for 2022. Traditionally, the holiday is celebrated for 16 days.</p> <p>The event showcased a parade, martial arts demonstrations, food, music and vendors. The successful turnout was welcomed after a challenging couple of years for the International District.</p> <p>The COVID-19 outbreak sparked hate against the Asian community. It affected tourism in the area, and even forced some businesses to shut down. Many people who work and live in the historic neighborhood were unsure of their future.</p> <p>"[There was] a period of time where we really couldn't do anything. There was such uncertainty. Every time you walked out of your door, it's uncertain. You have a business—you don't know what the day is going to be like. So, all that we had control of was to open the doors and closing doors at night, going home after work," said Leong.</p> <p>Crime, violence and graffiti also overwhelmed the district—issues the area is still trying to overcome. Just last Wednesday, a man was <a href="#">shot and killed in the CID</a>. It's unusual activity for a community that has been in that part of Seattle for generations.</p>



	<p>"It was just a culmination of negative energy that made everything all kind of pile on top of each other. So, it's going to take some time for that to unravel," said Leong. "Nothing gets done, fixed or improved overnight. It takes time."</p> <p>Judging by the amount of festival attendees, it seems like time is something people are willing to spend to help revitalize the CID and celebrate what makes that neighborhood a cultural intersection of the city.</p> <p>"We want Seattle to come back to be the great city that it is and will become again very soon. And we're making good headway today," said Leong. "The people smiling, the kids, the young, the old, people from all backgrounds—this is what community is about."</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Oligarch criticized the war; retribution swift</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/oligarch-putin-oleg-tinkov.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/oligarch-putin-oleg-tinkov.html</a>
GIST	<p>Oleg Y. Tinkov <a href="#">was worth</a> more than \$9 billion in November, renowned as one of Russia's few self-made business tycoons after building his fortune outside the energy and minerals industries that were the playgrounds of Russian kleptocracy.</p> <p>Then, last month, Mr. Tinkov, the founder of one of Russia's biggest banks, criticized the war in Ukraine in a post on Instagram. The next day, he said, President Vladimir V. Putin's administration contacted his executives and threatened to nationalize his bank if it did not cut ties with him. Last week, he sold his 35 percent stake to a Russian mining billionaire in what he describes as a "desperate sale, a fire sale" that was forced on him by the Kremlin.</p> <p>"I couldn't discuss the price," Mr. Tinkov said. "It was like a hostage — you take what you are offered. I couldn't negotiate."</p> <p>Mr. Tinkov, 54, spoke to The New York Times by phone on Sunday, from a location he would not disclose, in his first interview since Mr. Putin invaded Ukraine. He said he had hired bodyguards after friends with contacts in the Russian security services told him he should fear for his life, and quipped that while he had survived leukemia, perhaps "the Kremlin will kill me."</p> <p>It was a swift and jarring turn of fortune for a longtime billionaire who for years had avoided running afoul of Mr. Putin while portraying himself as independent of the Kremlin. His downfall underscores the consequences facing those in the Russian elite who dare to cross their president, and helps explain why there has been little but silence from business leaders who, according to Mr. Tinkov, are worried about the impact of the war on their lifestyles and their wallets.</p> <p>Indeed, Mr. Tinkov claimed that many of his acquaintances in the business and government elite told him privately that they agreed with him, "but they are all afraid."</p> <p>In the interview, Mr. Tinkov spoke out more forcefully against the war than has any other major Russian business leader.</p> <p>"I've realized that Russia, as a country, no longer exists," Mr. Tinkov said, predicting that Mr. Putin would stay in power a long time. "I believed that the Putin regime was bad. But of course, I had no idea that it would take on such catastrophic scale."</p> <p>The Kremlin did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Tinkoff, the bank Mr. Tinkov started in 2006, denied his characterization of events and said there had been "no threats of any kind against the bank's leadership." The bank, which announced last Thursday that Mr. Tinkov had sold his entire stake in the company to a firm run by Vladimir Potanin, a mining magnate close to Mr. Putin, appeared to be distancing itself from its founder.</p>



“Oleg has not been in Moscow for many years, did not participate in the life of the company and was not involved in any matters,” Tinkoff said in a statement.

Mr. Tinkov has also run into trouble in the West. He [agreed](#) to pay \$507 million last year to settle a tax fraud case in the United States. In March, Britain included him on a list of sanctions against the Russian business elite.

“These oligarchs, businesses and hired thugs are complicit in the murder of innocent civilians and it is right that they pay the price,” Foreign Secretary Liz Truss [said](#) at the time.

Mr. Tinkov is nevertheless widely seen as a rare Russian business pioneer, modeling his maverick capitalism on Richard Branson and morphing from [irreverent beer brewer](#) to founder of one of the world’s [most sophisticated](#) online banks. He says he has never set foot in the Kremlin, and he has occasionally criticized Mr. Putin.

But unlike Russian tycoons who years ago broke with Mr. Putin and now live in exile, such as the former oil magnate Mikhail B. Khodorkovsky or the tech entrepreneur Pavel Durov, Mr. Tinkov found a way to coexist with the Kremlin and make billions — at least until April 19.

That is when Mr. Tinkov published an emotional antiwar [post](#) on Instagram, calling the invasion “crazy” and deriding Russia’s military: “Why would we have a good army,” he asked, if everything else in the country is dysfunctional “and mired in nepotism, servility and subservience?”

Pro-war Russians posted photos of their shredded Tinkoff debit cards on social media. Vladimir Solovyov, a prominent state television host, [delivered](#) a tirade against him, declaring, “Your conscience is rotten.”

Mr. Tinkov was already outside Russia at that point, having departed in 2019 to receive treatment for leukemia. He later stepped down and ceded control of Tinkoff, but kept a 35 percent stake in the company, which was valued at more than \$20 billion on the London stock exchange last year.

A day after the April 19 post, Mr. Tinkov said Sunday, the Kremlin contacted the bank’s senior executives and told them that any association with their founder was now a major problem.

“They said: ‘The statement of your shareholder is not welcomed, and we will nationalize your bank if he doesn’t sell it and the owner doesn’t change, and if you don’t change the name,’” Mr. Tinkov said, citing sources at Tinkoff he declined to identify.

On April 22, Tinkoff announced it would change its name this year, a step it claims was long planned. Behind the scenes, Mr. Tinkov says, he was scrambling to sell his stake — one that had already been devalued by Western sanctions against Russia’s financial system.

Mr. Tinkov said he was thankful to Mr. Potanin, the mining magnate, for allowing him to salvage at least some money from his company; he said that he could not disclose a price, but that he had sold at 3 percent of what he believed to be his stake’s true value.

“They made me sell it because of my pronouncements,” Mr. Tinkov said. “I sold it for kopecks.”

He had been considering selling his stake anyway, Mr. Tinkov said, because “as long as Putin is alive, I doubt anything will change.”

“I don’t believe in Russia’s future,” he said. “Most importantly, I am not prepared to associate my brand and my name with a country that attacks its neighbors without any reason at all.”

Mr. Tinkov is concerned that a foundation he started that is dedicated to improving blood cancer treatment in Russia could also become a casualty of his financial trouble.

	<p>He denied that he was speaking out in the hopes of getting the U.K. sanctions against him lifted, though he said he hoped the British government would eventually “correct this mistake.”</p> <p>He said that his illness — he is now suffering from graft-versus-host disease, a stem-cell transplant complication, he said — might have made him more courageous about speaking out than other Russian business leaders and senior officials. Members of the elite, he claimed, are “in shock” about the war and have called him in great numbers to offer support.</p> <p>“They understand that they are tied to the West, that they are part of the global market, and so on,” Mr. Tinkov said. “They’re fast, fast being turned into Iran. But they don’t like it. They want their kids to spend their summer holidays in Sardinia.”</p> <p>Mr. Tinkov said that no one from the Kremlin had ever contacted him directly, but that in addition to the pressure on his company, he heard from friends with security service contacts that he could be in physical danger.</p> <p>“They told me: ‘The decision regarding you has been made,’” he said. “Whether that means that on top of everything they’re going to kill me, I don’t know. I don’t rule it out.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/01 Portland police close cold case team</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kptv.com/2022/05/01/its-devastating-ppb-temporarily-close-cold-case-team/">https://www.kptv.com/2022/05/01/its-devastating-ppb-temporarily-close-cold-case-team/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>PORTLAND Ore. (KPTV) - The Portland Police Bureau is temporarily closing their cold case team to deal with the increasing number of homicides the city is seeing.</p> <p>With nights with rash amounts of crime, Portland Police said they are stretched thin. So far, 2022 has seen 33 homicides, and 31 of those were shootings.</p> <p>In an email to employees, Chief Chuck Lovell said having only 18 homicide detectives is not sustainable with the number of homicides they are responding to. He went on to say because of that, they are pulling a sergeant and six detectives from different teams to create a third homicide detail, which includes the sergeant that oversees the cold case team.</p> <p>Lovell said it was a difficult decision, but he hopes to re-staff the old case team when they get more resources.</p> <p>This news comes nearly eight years after Paul Krekeler, known by friends as Paul Miler, was shot and killed in Southeast Portland.</p> <p>“Paul Miller is a legend and he always will be,” his friend, Kemper Woodruff, said. “If you looked at all his friends, he was a caretaker over a lot of people.”</p> <p>All these years later, his loved ones are still dealing with unanswered questions, like who could’ve done this? Even Crime Stoppers of Oregon offered a \$2,500 reward for any information leading to an arrest last July.</p> <p>“That’s torture. What about the future this person had that they weren’t truly able to live out?” Kemper Woodruff said.</p> <p>While this news is painful for families waiting for justice, Woodruff said this could be a problem for the community at large, too.</p> <p>“What happens when it’s your best friend? What happens when it’s your kid and there’s no one there to research? Because that’s the reality that we all face now,” he said.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Understaffed Portland police struggle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/antifa-assaults-portland-gop-rallygoers-understaffed-police-struggle-respond">https://www.foxnews.com/us/antifa-assaults-portland-gop-rallygoers-understaffed-police-struggle-respond</a>
GIST	<p>The resource-strapped Portland Police Bureau (PPB) reportedly took more than 20 minutes to respond when alleged antifa members assaulted a Saturday campaign event near police headquarters in downtown Portland.</p> <p>By the time officers had "sufficient resources" to establish a crime scene near Southwest 3rd and Main Street, the black-clad demonstrators had already dispersed after hurling smoke grenades, paint-filled balloons and fireworks, according to police. Two were injured by "mortars," police said.</p> <p>The protesters' violence cut short the event in support of Republican gubernatorial candidate Stan Pulliam, whose platform includes refunding the police.</p> <p>"This is what happens when a Republican dares to hold an event in Portland to talk about funding our police. Antifa shows up," Pulliam tweeted along with footage of the incident.</p> <p>Pulliam also claimed the "underfunded police didn't show in time to allow our free speech."</p> <p>Speaking to media after the incident, Pulliam said what he and his supporters experienced is what "neighbors throughout the Portland community have to experience on almost a daily basis."</p> <p>"We called the police, we called 911," he said. "In fact, at the Justice of Peace Center, we were just outside of their headquarters, sat on hold for over 20 minutes. No police officers ever arrive until the very end, just to take our statement."</p> <p>Pulliam contrasted when Portland had 30 officers per 100,000 people in the 1970s to the present-day ratio of eight per 100,000.</p> <p>"And then we wonder why we have all the violence and destruction happening on our streets," he added.</p> <p>A statement from the PPB confirmed that while a sergeant began monitoring the situation and gathering available resources, there "were only a few officers available in the precinct."</p> <p>The incident came the same day PPB released a separate statement describing Friday night into Saturday as "an extraordinarily busy evening of significant events" that strained their resources. The night included five shootings, three serious crashes and one stolen ambulance within a 12-hour span.</p> <p>Officers responded to a call about shots fired and people throwing objects off an overpass while a protest "convoy" driving through Portland was confronted by a group of counter-demonstrators.</p> <p>Given limited staffing, Portland residents calling 911 are often left on hold for hours during evening spikes in calls, which police are forced to prioritize calls based on seriousness.</p> <p>"We're pretty good, generally, at deploying resources to the area of the highest need. It's been a while since I could say that I feel like we have enough cops to do everything that we want to do to keep the public safe," Sgt. Kevin Allen told local ABC affiliate KATU.</p> <p>Neither PPB nor Democratic Mayor Ted Wheeler's office responded to a request for comment in time for publication.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Strong winds fuel New Mexico wildfire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/us/new-mexico-wildfire.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/us/new-mexico-wildfire.html</a>

SANTA FE, N.M. — High winds in northern New Mexico on Sunday once again posed a stiff challenge to crews battling a large wildfire that grew significantly over the weekend.

The Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire east of Santa Fe, which began as two fires before merging a week ago, had burned almost 104,000 acres, or more than 160 square miles, by Sunday, up from about 75,000 acres on Friday. It was 30 percent contained, fire officials said, with smoke from that fire and another — the Cerro Pelado fire in Jemez Springs, roughly 40 miles west of Santa Fe — permeating much of the northern part of the state.

The air quality in Las Vegas, N.M., was expected to be unhealthy and potentially hazardous on Monday, officials said at a briefing on Sunday.

More than 1,100 firefighters have worked to contain the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon blaze. The spread of the fire from Friday into Saturday exceeded predictions, officials said in public briefings. Wind speeds exceeded 65 miles per hour at times, according to Mike Johnson, a fire information officer. On Sunday, wind gusts reached 48 m.p.h., and “extreme fire behavior” was possible in the early part of the week, according to InciWeb, a government website that tracks wildfires.

The winds on Sunday, which kept changing direction, led fire officials to ground air support operations by midafternoon. Fire officials also closed several national monuments and forests in the area.

No deaths or injuries have been reported from the fire. The state police reported the deaths of two people in April from another wildfire.

Carl Schwope, a commander of a team in the region that combines firefighting resources from federal, state, local and other agencies, said on Saturday that the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire “could easily double in size” before being contained.

“We’re still in a very dangerous fire situation. It’s going to continue,” he said, adding that winds were not letting up. “There’s nothing in the weather that looks like it’s going to change. High wind events, north wind events, south wind events. It’s all over the board.”

Mr. Schwope also urged residents to be on alert for more evacuation announcements, and on Sunday afternoon, residents in two areas of Mora County were ordered to leave immediately. According to Mr. Johnson, about 6,000 people from 32 communities in the vicinity of the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, some in rural mountain areas, were already under orders to leave.

Monica Aragon left her house in Ledoux, a small community northeast of Santa Fe, on April 22 and has returned just once. She and her two children have been staying with her parents in Chimayo, about 60 miles from her home.

On Friday, she said, she received a call from a volunteer firefighter describing the situation. He said he did not want her to panic, but that the fire had reached the road in front of her house. Firefighters were “keeping it away from your home,” she recalled him saying.

Because of the ongoing danger, county officials have been unable to provide a full accounting of how many structures have been destroyed or damaged. But Joy Ansley, the county manager for San Miguel County, said that before the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire expanded on Friday, it had destroyed 200 structures.

Roger Montoya, a New Mexico state representative whose district includes three counties currently being affected by fires, spent time last week with a team delivering food and other supplies to residents who had not yet left. Some were without electricity, he said.

“There’s a reluctance for individuals to leave their homes,” he said.

	<p>Samuel Coca, the general manager of a bar in the Castañeda Hotel in Las Vegas, N.M., said he had three vehicles packed with belongings in case he and his family needed to leave.</p> <p>As the fire grew Friday, along with the number of people leaving their homes, his bar began providing free buffet dinners for firefighters and evacuees. Many people left home with the clothes they were wearing and not much else, he added.</p> <p>“The first dozen people I spoke with lost everything,” Mr. Coca said. “They lost their houses, their ranches, some livestock. It was hard to get through the afternoon without crying.”</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 May Day rallies in Europe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/day-rallies-europe-honor-workers-protest-govts-84425482">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/day-rallies-europe-honor-workers-protest-govts-84425482</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS -- Tens of thousands of people marched Sunday in cities around Europe for May Day protests to honor workers and shame governments into doing more for their citizens. In France, protesters shouted slogans against newly elected President Emmanuel Macron, a development that may set the tone for his second term.</p> <p>Tensions erupted in Paris, as some demonstrators smashed windows at some banks, a fast-food restaurant and a real estate agency, apparently partially the work of masked men dressed in black. French police moved in, firing rounds of tear gas. That failed to stop a woman from attacking a firefighter trying to douse a street fire.</p> <p>Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said 45 people had been detained so far, including the young woman. Eight police officers were injured, he said, calling the perpetrators of the violence “thugs” who were trying “to stop the right to demonstrate.”</p> <p>May Day is often a time of high emotions for workers in Europe, and protests in the last two years have been limited by pandemic restrictions.</p> <p>Turkish police moved in quickly in Istanbul to encircle protesters near the barred-off Taksim Square — where 34 people were killed in 1977 during a May Day event.</p> <p>On Sunday, Turkish police detained 164 people for demonstrating without permits and resisting police at the square, the Istanbul governor's office said. On the Asian side of sprawling Istanbul, a May Day union-organized gathering drew thousands who sang, chanted and waved banners.</p> <p>Berlin Mayor Franziska Giffey briefly interrupted her May Day speech at a trade union rally where someone threw an egg at her but missed. Giffey, of the center-left Social Democrats, was met by loud protests during her speech. Giffey called the egg tossing “neither helpful nor politically valuable.”</p> <p>In Italy, after a two-year pandemic lull, an outdoor mega-concert was being held in Rome after rallies and protests in cities across the country. Besides improving conditions for workers, peace was an underlying theme, with many calls for an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Italy's three main labor unions held their main rally in the hilltop town of Assisi, a frequent destination for peace protests.</p> <p>“It's a May Day of social and civil commitment for peace and labor,” said the head of Italy's CISL union, Daniela Fumarola.</p> <p>In Russia, a motorcade organized by the country's trade unions supportive of the invasion of Ukraine finished its cross-country trip in Moscow Sunday to mark May Day. Participating were 70 cars representing all Russian regions from Vladivostok to Astrakhan, as well as the Russia-backed separatist administrations controlling parts of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions.</p>

May Day celebrations in Russia also saw the arrests of antiwar protesters and bystanders across the country, including some who demonstrated in support of the authorities. According to reports by the Russian legal aid group OVD-Info, which tracks political arrests, a man was detained in Moscow after holding up a sign in support of the FSB and President Vladimir Putin.

Rising inflation and fears of upcoming food shortages from the war in Ukraine were feeding discontent around the world.

Thousands of workers, unemployed people and retirees marched peacefully in North Macedonia's capital of Skopje, demanding wage increases and respect for workers' rights. Inflation, running at an annual clip of 8.8% in March, is at a 14-year-high.

Darko Dimovski, head of the country's Federation of Trade Unions, told the crowd that workers are demanding an across-the-board wage increase.

"The economic crisis has eaten up workers salaries," he said.

In France, the May Day rallies — which came a week after the country's presidential election — aimed to show the centrist Macron the opposition that he could face in his second five-year term. Opposition parties, notably from the far-left and the far-right, are looking to break his government's majority in France's parliamentary election in June.

The Paris march was dominated by far-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon, who placed third in the first round of the presidential vote and is deep in talks with other leftist parties in France, including the once-dominant Socialists who are struggling to exist. Melenchon appealed to potential partners to ally to keep Macron's centrists from dominating parliament as they do now.

"Our goal is victory," he said.

Some 250 marches and protests were being held around France. All were pressing Macron for policies that put people first and condemning his plan to raise France's retirement age from 62 to 65. Macron says that's the only way the government can continue to provide good retirement benefits.

"May Day is the time to rally for a reduction in working time. That reduction signifies one key thing — that workers should be getting a larger share of the wealth," Melenchon said, condemning the violence at the Paris march, which he said overshadows the concerns of workers.

In a first, French far-right leader Marine Le Pen was absent from her party's traditional wreath-laying at the foot of a statue of Joan of Arc, replaced by the interim president of her National Rally party. Le Pen was defeated by Macron in the April 24 presidential runoff, and plans to campaign to keep her seat as a lawmaker.

"I've come to tell the French that the voting isn't over. There is a third round, the legislative elections," said National Rally's Jordan Bardella. "It would be unbelievable to leave full power to Emmanuel Macron."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Shanghai residents fearful, angry</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/patience-wears-thin-shanghai-residents-lockdown/story?id=84339140">https://abcnews.go.com/International/patience-wears-thin-shanghai-residents-lockdown/story?id=84339140</a>
GIST	<p>HONG KONG and NEW YORK -- As countries around the world slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, China is battling its worst outbreak as the last holdout of a hardline "Zero-COVID" policy.</p> <p>Residents are growing increasingly weary in Shanghai, where a lockdown of 25 million people is entering its fifth week. Cases in the economic powerhouse fell to their lowest levels in weeks on Thursday, raising hope that authorities might ease lockdown measures.</p>



Kenie, a Shanghai resident whose last name ABC News is not including for privacy reasons, has been confined to her home with her two kids and elderly parents since March.

Like others in Shanghai, they are facing a shortage of food and finding it difficult to get deliveries. Kenie said in her neighborhood in the suburbs of Shanghai, the government rations are sparse, and she's been forced to eat one meal a day so her kids and parents can eat more.

"I cannot cook because we have nothing to cook. I have only instant noodles left," said Kenie. "Actually, I feel very disappointed and depressed."

Kenie was finally able to source some insulin for her diabetic father through a friend, but she said authorities weren't helping her find the medicine.

She was once supportive of the Chinese government's policies, but her view has changed since she's had to endure such tough conditions in lockdown.

"I'm angry, but I have no choice," she told ABC News. "You feel helpless. I have no power to use. I'm angry, but I'm here. I don't have any right to do something."

Kenie said she's more fearful of being sent to the city's isolation facilities where everyone who tests positive must be sent than of the virus itself. The official death toll is comparatively low. In Shanghai, there have been nearly 300 deaths from more than half a million infections since the lockdown began.

Alessandro Pavanello, who moved to Shanghai several years ago to study and now lives there with his girlfriend, recorded his experience at one of the isolation facilities this month where he said he had no showering facilities or privacy.

While some expats have chosen to remain quiet out of concern for the consequences, Pavanello said he felt the need to share something he "was not OK with."

"Sure, people have been quiet about this issue, presumably because they are maybe interested in staying in China after all this happens or they are afraid of repercussion," he said.

Pavanello said that while in quarantine for six days, he lost weight and gained new grey hairs. He said that only sleeping for four hours each night and being constantly surrounded by loud sounds affected his mental well-being.

"A lot of other people that I have talked with that have been going to these places suffered in a variety of different ways, but mostly on their mental health, which I think is one of the aspects that was never taken into consideration when they decided here to start creating these isolation centers," he said.

Other residents are also questioning a policy in which the social and economic costs are mounting.

Yet Chinese President Xi Jinping appears determined to stick with the country's no-tolerance "Zero-COVID" policy, whatever it takes.

The toolkit of lockdowns, testing and surveillance helped China suppress infections to relatively low levels in the first two years of the pandemic, but with each new variant, maintaining the approach has become difficult.

China political expert and former State Department official Susan Shirk told ABC News' "Nightline" last week that "Zero-COVID" required "a system of social control that was much more invasive, expansive, than anything that most other countries would be able to carry out."

Shirk said the consequences of China locking down its economic powerhouse will be felt globally. Shanghai is home to one of the world's major shipping ports, and cargo ships are currently backed up around the coast.

"We should care because it definitely is going to affect our ability of our economy to function smoothly," Shirk said, "The disruption of the supply chains, aggravating inflation, is going to make our economic lives more difficult too."

Two weeks ago, American writer Jamie Peñaloza, who lives in Shanghai, was remaining optimistic. The former chef made the most of the situation, getting creative with government food rations by making ricotta cheese out of milk supplies.

Now, Peñaloza's tone has shifted after losing her main freelance job and seeing videos of harsh life in lockdown.

"It's a bit like Groundhog Day in a bad way. It's a bit surreal," she told ABC News.

Peñaloza said she's lucky compared with others who have experienced food shortages, but she feels a sense of helplessness.

Pavanello is now back at home in Shanghai, but he's tested positive again and is worried he may be sent back to a facility.

The residents ABC News spoke with shared a common sense of helplessness, as if they were on a merry-go-round of restrictions and easing, with no end in sight.

Peñaloza said she is sticking it out in China for the near future, while Kenie and Pavanello both expressed plans to leave because of what they'd experienced under lockdown.

"I don't know when this is going to end, and there's nothing I can do about this," said Pavanello.

As Peñaloza said, "One person can test positive and that just sets the score back to zero."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Mariupol civilian evacuations underway</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/01/ukraine-dozens-civilains-evacuated-mariupol/4951651419239/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/01/ukraine-dozens-civilains-evacuated-mariupol/4951651419239/</a>
GIST	<p>May 1 (UPI) -- Dozens of civilians were evacuated from near the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Ukraine, Russian state media reported Sunday and later confirmed by Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry said in statements to state-run media TASS and RAI Novosti that at least 40 civilians, including 14 women and eight children, were evacuated from residential buildings near the besieged steel plant on Sunday.</p> <p>Russian state media reported that two previous groups with 46 civilians had been evacuated on Saturday. The evacuees have reportedly been taken to the village of Bezimenne in the Russian-backed Donetsk region of Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed in a tweet that the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal has started and that 100 people have already headed toward a control area where they will be met by Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>"Tomorrow we'll meet them in Zaporizhzhia. Grateful to our team! Now they, together with United Nations, are working on the evacuation of other civilians from the plant," Zelensky said.</p>

The Mariupol City Council also confirmed that an evacuation effort was in progress in a message on Telegram and told people to gather near a former shopping center. "If you have relatives or acquaintances in Mariupol, try to contact them in all ways," the officials wrote.

"Call, write and say that it is possible to go to Zaporizhzhia, where it is safe."

Capt. Svyatoslav Palamar, the deputy commander of the Azov Regiment, said in a video message from the steel plant on Sunday that the evacuations come from the introduction of a ceasefire that had been brokered by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Palamar said that the civilians were taken an "agreed meeting point" and hoped they are evacuated to Zaporizhzhia -- the agreed destination.

Some 100,000 people are still in Mariupol, which is a quarter of the population before the Russia-Ukraine war broke out Feb. 24. Ukrainian officials have said that residents of the city have suffered from "intolerable" and "unsanitary" conditions.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Snohomish unvaxxed firefighters return?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.heraldnet.com/news/13-unvaccinated-firefighters-are-cleared-to-return-to-work/">https://www.heraldnet.com/news/13-unvaccinated-firefighters-are-cleared-to-return-to-work/</a>
GIST	<p>MONROE — Thirteen firefighters who have been out of a job for six months because they did not comply with Gov. Jay Inslee’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate may soon be back at work.</p> <p>Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue’s Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Thursday to clear a path for them to return to duty.</p> <p>The district serves about 181,000 residents in Lake Stevens, Monroe and adjacent unincorporated areas of southeast Snohomish County.</p> <p>About 92% of the district’s 170 firefighters are fully vaccinated. The 13 who declined to get vaccinated have been on leave — paid and unpaid — since October.</p> <p>For weeks, the firefighters and their supporters have been making their case to the board as to why they should return. Several dozen people at Thursday’s meeting stood up and clapped after the vote.</p> <p>The district will now review the accommodations it can grant to the 13 employees who have “a disability or sincerely held religious belief that prevent them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccination,” according to an April 20 letter to commissioners from Fire Chief Kevin O’Brien.</p> <p>The 13 had previously obtained exemptions from the COVID-19 vaccine but did not receive accommodations to work.</p> <p>“Our goal is to welcome them back with open arms,” O’Brien said. “We care about you. You’re a very important part of our team and want to get you back to work as soon as possible.”</p> <p>It was always the district’s intention to bring the firefighters back, O’Brien told The Daily Herald.</p> <p>“We saw a change in the landscape of COVID-19, and the district sees we are able to safely accommodate firefighters on a case-by-case basis to have them come back to duty,” said O’Brien, who is fully vaccinated. “It’s a different time than it was last winter or last fall.”</p> <p>About 74% of Snohomish County residents 5 and older are fully vaccinated, according to the state’s COVID-19 data dashboard. After a steep decline, COVID-19 cases increased in April, though the rate of hospitalizations has remained flat, state Department of Health officials said in a <a href="#">briefing</a> last week.</p>

O'Brien said there's another reason he supports the 13 firefighters being reinstated: The group is relatively small. As many as 40 — nearly a quarter of the force — initially sought exemptions when the mandate was first announced, he said. Since then, most have gotten vaccinated.

All firefighters, regardless of vaccination status, are required to test daily and wear masks, O'Brien said.

Not all districts have granted accommodations. Last week in King County, Eastside Fire and Rescue fired six firefighters for not complying with the state's mandate.

O'Brien said Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue analyzed the risks and benefits of bringing back the 13.

"Our mission is absolutely about saving lives and protecting lives," he said. "It's a balance. We want to make sure all firefighters and the public are safe. We want to make sure we have our staff so we can go on 9/11 calls. We need those firefighters."

David Peterson is one who may soon return to work. He has been a firefighter at Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue for 12 years. He said not working has been a financial hardship on his family and "a devastating blow to serving the public."

"That's been the main goal from the very beginning — what can I do to help other people?" Peterson said. He cited religious and medical objections to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Health officials maintain COVID-19 vaccines are safe and protect against severe illness and hospitalization.

Another firefighter who may return is Evan Merritt, who has been with the district for six years. He said he declined a vaccine over religious and personal beliefs.

Merritt said he has been on unpaid leave since November after running out of paid time off. He has an infant son along with two other young sons.

He said the past six months have been "super frustrating" as he waited to hear what would happen.

"That's what we were called to do — to be able to help and not be powerless," he said.

Merritt said he most looks forward to working again with "all the brothers and sisters we work with. And to be able to serve the community."

Other fire departments in Snohomish County have also brought back unvaccinated firefighters. Marysville Fire District spokesperson Christie Veley said four firefighters returned to work in early February after receiving accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But other districts have not had that issue.

In Fire District 4, which serves the Snohomish area, 100% of firefighters got vaccinated, Fire Chief Don Waller said.

"I'm extremely proud," he said. "The best thing is it has allowed us to work through the pandemic with everyone being on the same page."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Thurston Co. \$700K homeless hotel stays
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theolympian.com/news/local/article260788847.html">https://www.theolympian.com/news/local/article260788847.html</a>
GIST	When city and county officials moved to sweep encampments around Olympia and house the camp residents in hotels, they were hoping it would end in more people in supportive housing units and shelters.

But only a handful of people out of more than 75 households found success. Officials blamed poor planning and unexpected complexities, with a lack of funding to top it off.

Though funding was an issue, the city of Olympia and Thurston County combined still spent nearly \$700,000 on hotel stays, damages, RV and car acquisitions, and more related to the camp sweeps.

Kim Kondrat, Olympia's homeless response coordinator, said the city learned from the winter hotel stays that the only solution is to build more permanent supportive housing and stop pushing people out of camps when there is nowhere else to go.

Kondrat said accessing resources when you're on the streets takes time, and individual case management is a challenge when those who need it are hard to track down.

"There needs to be more of a streamlined process in our community, and that doesn't exist yet," Kondrat said. "We're working on that, making those clear paths. It's hard for people to navigate it on their own."

The money the city and county spent on putting people into hotels for the winter hardly compares to what's needed to build permanent supportive housing. Unity Commons, the city's first housing project built partially with Home Fund dollars, cost \$20.7 million. The majority of the money came from federal Low-income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and the Washington state Housing Trust Fund.

#### BREAKDOWN OF COSTS

According to information from officials with Thurston County's homeless response program and the city of Olympia, the winter hotel stays, vehicle acquisition costs and other miscellaneous expenses cost around \$704,000. Here's where all that money went.

When the city swept residents off Ensign Road in front of Providence St. Peter Hospital in January, many people opted to sell their car or recreational vehicle in exchange for a hotel room and some cash to help them secure housing later.

Assistant City Manager Keith Stahley confirmed that the city bought 20 vehicles. The city bought most for \$2,000 and some for \$500, for a total of \$31,900 spent on buying people's temporary homes and sometimes only means of transportation.

The vehicles are now going through a process to be deemed junk vehicles before they're scrapped, Kondrat said.

During the sweep, the city also confiscated people's tents and sleeping bags, only for them to need replacing once people were back on the streets. The city's homeless response team spent \$10,935 on new sleeping bags and tents.

From November 2021 to March 2022, the city of Olympia spent \$335,026 on hotel stays. That includes the La Quinta and Super 8 motels in Lacey, Red Lion in Olympia and the Tumwater Motel 6, according to data obtained by The Olympian.

Damage caused at the La Quinta Inn alone totaled \$77,983, almost a fourth of the total cost.

In a prior interview, Stahley told The Olympian that with a lack of planning and case workers, several hotel residents were quickly kicked out for not following the rules or damaging rooms. He said there wasn't enough support to help acclimate people to temporary indoor stays.

The costs for the countywide program were almost evenly split between the city and Thurston County.

	<p>Thomas Webster, the county’s housing and homeless prevention program manager, said the county started paying for hotel rooms at the Olympia Inn in December and the Lacey Super 8 in January. The last day they paid for hotel rooms was Feb. 22. Within that time frame, the county spent \$252,000 on hotel rooms.</p> <p>Webster said the county also gave Olympia Mutual Aid Partners \$74,000 through an existing contract to provide services to people at the Super 8, bringing the total up to \$326,000. This number may be even higher, as the county finishes up payments for the Super 8.</p> <p>Webster said the majority of the funds came from an Emergency Solutions Grant for COVID relief funding through the state Department of Commerce. The rest came from local document recording fee funds that are dedicated to homeless services activities.</p> <p>Kondrat said she hopes she can help the public realize how difficult it is for people experiencing homelessness to access resources, especially when money is the main barrier. She said she’s working with other outreach providers in the county on how to bring more awareness of these difficulties to the community.</p> <p>Kondrat said she’d like to see the community participate in the solution more through volunteering or through donations of clothing, supplies and money, which can be donated at City Hall. “I believe if you see someone in need, you’re supposed to act,” Kondrat said.</p> <p>“If you see a problem, you’re supposed to be a part of the solution.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Inflation reached a peak?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/01/investing/stocks-week-ahead/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/01/investing/stocks-week-ahead/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>New York</b><b>CNN Business</b> — <a href="#">Inflation is at a 40-year high</a>, and Americans are feeling it.</p> <p>A gallon of <a href="#">gas costs</a> about double what it cost in January 2021. <a href="#">Home prices</a> were up a whopping 19.8% year-over-year in February. And, in March, groceries <a href="#">cost 10% more</a> than they did a year earlier.</p> <p>Thankfully some analysts think that the burden could soon ease, and that we’ve reached an inflationary top.</p> <p>This week, the Federal Reserve will meet and likely announce plans to raise interest rates, a tool used to combat rampant inflation. However, investors fear that accelerating the pace of interest rate hikes could drag the economy into recession.</p> <p>Ryan Detrick, chief market strategist for LPL Financial, thinks it’s likely that inflation has already reached a peak on its own, and that the Fed could start to pull back on interest rates by the second half of the year.</p> <p><a href="#">The core personal consumption expenditures index</a>, which the Federal Reserve closely watches to measure the price of goods and services, grew by 5.2% in March, excluding food and energy prices, coming in below economists’ expectations and falling on a monthly basis for the first time since October 2020.</p> <p>Analysts at UBS also said this month that they expect inflation will likely peak in March and then fall “sharply.”</p> <p>Detrick points to three key economic indicators for that belief: a drop in used car prices, a lack of “sticky” inflation, and a relative easing in supply chain chaos (though China’s <a href="#">Covid-related shutdowns</a> could put an end to that).</p> <p>The chip shortage caused by supply chain kinks and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, has made getting a new car very difficult, and the prices of used cars and trucks have correspondingly soared. In February, the price of a used car was up about 45% year-over-year, according to the <a href="#">Manheim Used Car Value Index</a>.</p>



But it has since come down to about 25%. Two months of declines show that the prices of used cars, which make up 4% of the consumer price index, could finally be reverting back to pre-pandemic levels.

[The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta breaks inflation](#) into two categories: sticky and flexible. Sticky inflation is a basket of goods that tends to change more slowly and permanently in price, things like the cost of education, public transportation and motor vehicle insurance. Flexible inflation includes items that move up and down in cost more quickly: gas, clothing, milk and cheese.

During the stagflation of the 1970s, both sticky and flexible inflation grew. But so far sticky inflation has remained relatively flat compared with flexible inflation, a good sign that this could still be temporary.

Of course, it could take some time for sticky inflation to play catch up, but Detrick says he's optimistic. Flexible inflation is like a rubber band, he said, you can stretch it pretty far and it will still snap back.

And though shutdowns in China could hurt the global supply chain, it does appear that problems are easing — at least for now. If businesses can easily obtain more supplies, the prices of materials go down and consumers won't be charged as much for goods and services, said Detrick.

Shipping rates from Shanghai to Los Angeles, New York and Rotterdam are down 28% on average from the peak last year, according to LPL Financial's data. Schedule reliability for container ships is also continuing to improve, according to new data from [analytics firm Sea-Intelligence](#). March also marked the third consecutive month of declines in average delays for container ships.

The move lower in inflation could be sudden as a result, especially for durable goods, said Detrick. Still, he warned, it's hard to tell if we're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel — or an oncoming train.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Germany May Day marches: Ukraine focus</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dw.com/en/germany-may-day-marches-draw-attention-to-ukraine/a-61650597">https://www.dw.com/en/germany-may-day-marches-draw-attention-to-ukraine/a-61650597</a>
GIST	<p>As cities across Germany marked <a href="#">International Labor Day</a> on Sunday, traditional marches also included calls for solidarity with Ukraine or an all-out stop to <a href="#">Russia's invasion of the country</a>.</p> <p>German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, from the center-left Social Democrats, told a May Day rally in Düsseldorf that his government was committed to supporting Ukraine with weapons.</p> <p>He said a pacifist approach was outdated and warned of the effect that the war would have on food prices.</p> <p>"I respect all pacifism, I respect all attitudes," said Scholz. "But it must seem cynical to a citizen of Ukraine to be told to defend himself against Putin's aggression without weapons."</p> <p>The German chancellor also warned of the <a href="#">danger posed by rising food prices</a>, with Ukraine — one of the biggest exports of wheat in the world — unable to export grain because of the war.</p> <p>However, Verdi Union leader Frank Werneke warned against an arms race in the wake of the German government's announcement that it was also set to <a href="#">increase defense spending</a>.</p> <p>"We don't want a new arms race that comes at the expense of urgent investments in social welfare, education and climate protection," he told a rally in the western city of Mainz.</p> <p>In Frankfurt, supporters of the Left Party marched behind a banner saying "Stop the war!"</p> <p>Clashes in Dortmund Police in Dortmund used pepper spray and batons against left-wing demonstrators.</p> <p>Officials said the protesters had attacked police and tried to break through a barrier.</p>

	<p>A spokeswoman for the group "Autonomen Antifa 170" complained of police violence, and said a number of participants had been injured.</p> <p>The demonstrators had gathered to protest against an expected march of some 220 right-wing extremists. That march had not begun at the time of the clashes with police, a police spokesperson said.</p> <p>There were also marches calling for improvements to workers' rights — a more traditional theme of the May 1 Labour Day rallies.</p> <p>In Berlin, among the many protesting groups was Germany's DJV journalists' union, calling for expanded rights for freelancers.</p> <p>Also in Berlin, Left Party politician Katja Kipping called for a new law to stipulate that when federal holidays fall on a weekend, workers should be given the closest Friday or Monday off.</p> <p>As Labor Day falls on a Sunday this year, it means no extra time off for workers.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/01 Sri Lanka president faces May Day protests</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220501-sri-lankan-leader-faces-may-day-calls-to-step-down">https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220501-sri-lankan-leader-faces-may-day-calls-to-step-down</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p><i>Colombo (AFP)</i> – Sri Lanka's fractious opposition showed rare unity Sunday, joining together to demand embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resign over the country's worst-ever economic crisis.</p> <p>Main opposition party the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) staged a mass rally at Independence Square in the capital Colombo, where speaker after speaker called for the ouster of Rajapaksa and his powerful ruling family.</p> <p>"For over a month, the president has been barricaded in his official residence," former legislator Hirunika Premachandra said. "It is time for us to pull him by his ear and kick him out."</p> <p>Months of lengthy blackouts, skyrocketing inflation and acute shortages of food, fuel and pharmaceuticals have sparked numerous anti-Rajapaksa protests across the country.</p> <p>Premachandra, who kicked off the wave of demonstrations by staging a sit-in outside the president's private home in mid-March, urged all parties to unite and topple the government.</p> <p>The JVP, the country's main leftist party, held its own rally outside a Colombo railway station, insisting the government should step down and allow an early election.</p> <p>"Gota go home, go home Gota," chanted tens of thousands of JVP activists waving red flags.</p> <p>Several minor opposition parties also demonstrated in Colombo and provincial capitals.</p> <p>But while Gota's ruling SLPP coalition skipped its customary May Day rally, the president issued a statement asking all political parties to "overcome the challenges we face."</p> <p>"Instead of following up on who is responsible for the current problematic situation, what we need to do now is to focus on what action can be taken to provide immediate relief," Rajapaksa said.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the capital, thousands of activists laid siege to Rajapaksa's sea-front office for the 23rd straight day, calling for his resignation.</p>

	The president reportedly told dissidents within his coalition government on Friday he was willing to consider forming a unity government, but that neither he nor his brother Mahinda, the country's prime minister, would step down.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Ukraine: Russia troops desperate to flee</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thestatesman.com/world/russian-troops-desperate-flee-ukraine-reveals-intercepted-messages-1503066416.html">https://www.thestatesman.com/world/russian-troops-desperate-flee-ukraine-reveals-intercepted-messages-1503066416.html</a>
GIST	<p>In what looks like a quagmire for Russia, Ukraine is proving to be a misadventure as many Russian soldiers on the ground have become weary of the war and want to leave it as soon as possible, some even willing to break their leg or arm in order to return home.</p> <p>Russian soldiers are so eager to flee the war in Ukraine that they are ready to put shrapnel into their bodies, according to conversations intercepted by the Security Service of Ukraine.</p> <p>In one intercepted conversation, a Russian soldier tells his girlfriend or wife that he is ready to break his arm or knock a piece of shrapnel into his leg with a “hammer” so that he would be sent home and will receive compensation for his injuries, Ukrayinska Pravda reported.</p> <p>The girl replies that then it would be better to shoot himself in the leg.</p> <p>The guy denies this: “I’d have to use a crossbow. That’s impossible!”</p> <p>In another recording, a militant of the so-called “DPR” (self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic) says that the Russians are refusing en masse to go on the offensive near Chornobaivka, causing panic in various ranks of their allies from the occupied territories of Donetsk region.</p> <p>The Russian special services were preparing provocations and riots in Odesa, together with criminal connections, for the anniversary of the tragic events of 2 May, 2014, Ukrayinska Pravda reported.</p> <p>Department of Strategic Investigations of the National Police said: “According to the department’s staff, the Russian special services, through criminals under their control, were intending to de-stabilise the situation in the region by inciting riots, organising mass protests and riots that could undermine statehood and overthrow Ukraine’s state system.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Calif. audit: 5 large police depts biased</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=1095429608">https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=1095429608</a>
GIST	<p>A scathing new report by California's Auditor of five large police departments across the state found evidence of officer bias against women, people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ people, as well as woefully inadequate department policies and procedures to stop discrimination or investigate incidents once they come to light.</p> <p><a href="#">The report</a> also says none of the departments have developed or implemented a clear plan to address bias and discrimination among their officers. "Without a comprehensive approach to guard against the presence and effects of bias," the report says, "the departments will be less able to identify, mitigate, and address bias."</p> <p>State auditors looked at both on-duty interactions with the public and publicly available social media posts of hundreds of officers. Auditors conceded their report is a snapshot and not intended "to catalogue every instance of biased conduct or statements by officers at these departments. Our work encompassed only a limited number of internal investigations and the publicly shared views of a selection of officers," auditors wrote.</p>

To critics, it will be seen as yet more evidence of systemic racism in American law enforcement and the need for wider structural changes in the screening, hiring, training, supervision, and oversight of police. The 2020 [murder of George Floyd](#) by Derek Chauvin, then a Minneapolis police officer, helped spark a national and global movement for racial justice and police reform.

The police California audited represent state, county and local agencies across the state including the departments in San Bernardino, San Jose, and Stockton; the Los Angeles Sheriff's department; and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Auditors found no clear evidence of outright membership in hate groups in these five agencies. They did, however, find some clear support for extremist and far-right groups such as [the Proud Boys](#) in the social media posts they had access to.

NPR spoke with Acting California State Auditor Michael Tilden about his agency's report.

### **Interview Highlights**

#### **This report is pretty disturbing. Give us a snapshot of what you found.**

We looked at five different law enforcement departments and our objective was to identify whether there were any officers of those departments that were either members of hate groups or had engaged in bias conduct. We actually reviewed the social media accounts of 750 officers across those five departments. And we reviewed 25 internal investigations and high level what we found is a number of officers posted bias statements on their social media accounts. We also found that some officers engaged in bias conduct towards members of the public. And we discovered that investigations that [departments] were doing of this possibly biased conduct were just inadequate.

#### **In one example, a citizen filed a complaint about an officer's social media post that used racist stereotypes Black people and made fun of Syrian refugees, Muslims. In another, a corrections officer taunted a Black youth using racist stereotypes. But you found the departments said any allegation of prejudice was false. That kind of incident shows a lack of accountability, no?**

Right. That was one of the key finds in the report. There were a number of situations where the departments conducted internal investigations of potentially biased conduct. And oftentimes the investigations were not thorough. They were not adequate. And more importantly, in the investigations, the departments oftentimes didn't even focus on the question about whether the officer's comments or conduct was biased.

#### **What else stood out for you whether it was a social media post or an interaction with a member of the public?**

There were 17 officers that posted biased content on their social media. And, some of those examples are pretty egregious in terms of comments that are very derogatory of different ethnic groups. And the other thing that's, I think, concerning about it is that the departments really don't have a process in place to identify that conduct.

#### **You found really a kind of disturbing pattern that they consistently failed to really investigate the conduct?**

Part of that is that there really isn't a definition of "biased conduct" out there that the departments are using. We found that there were shortcomings in terms of the training of their officers, in terms of what biased conduct looks like, and in terms of their investigations of potential misconduct.

And we found that when they did those investigations, they oftentimes would rely on the officers to explain that, "No, I don't have a bias to this towards this particular group of people." And oftentimes that was as far as they went.

#### **So, an officer says, "No I'm not racist," and the department would be like, "That's good enough for me." That's the investigation?**

That's right. We have a few examples in our report where we depict conduct that looks pretty egregious. And in some of those situations, the law enforcement investigators would ask the officers, "Did you do

that because you're biased against this particular group of people?" And oftentimes that the officer would say, "No." And that was kind of the end of it.

The other shortcoming there in terms of the investigations is that oftentimes they were focused on very blatant bias. And so it had to be very obvious.

**The audit says the posts and comments and interactions were generated by a relatively small number of police officers ... Do you see this as a kind of tip of the iceberg kind of thing?**

Right. We found 17 officers posted statements on their social media that we believe were biased, and we found six other officers that also had posted some content on their social media that suggested that they support different problematic groups. But I think what we found, really, is there's enough of it going on. And there's a lack of focus on bias behavior in the different departments in terms of hiring. They're not doing a good job of ensuring that their workforce or their new hires or even their applicants reflect the diversity of their communities.

**Did you find any evidence in your audit that law enforcement officers were members of far right or extremist organization, sort of card-carrying members of hate groups?**

It's very difficult because nobody's really necessarily tracking memberships in some of these hate groups. So we reviewed hundreds of internal investigations at the different departments. We reviewed social media accounts. And one of the things that we're looking for is any evidence that the officers were members of hate groups and we really didn't see that.

But one thing to keep in mind is that of the 750 officers that we selected, about 300 of those officers either didn't have social media accounts or, more pertinent I think, they were private. So we were unable to look at those accounts.

**You [make several recommendations](#) to the state Legislature and the governor and CDCR. What are the most important ones in your view? And do you have any confidence they'll get enacted and prove effective if they are?**

I think one of the key recommendations that we have is that there needs to be guidance for the law enforcement departments to do their own internet and social media screening of officer applicants like what we did, where you're looking at officers' social media accounts just to ensure that you're not hiring officers that are coming into the job with different biases. I think that's a really important recommendation.

**How did the police departments respond to the recommendations? Were you satisfied that they took this audit seriously? Do you think there are any teeth for these departments to enact the recommendations?**

By and large, the departments were very supportive of the all of our recommendations. We really didn't get any significant pushback from any of the departments. The city of San Bernardino's police department chose not to respond to our report.

I think the real value in the audit is that we're able to shine a spotlight on some of these deficiencies in some of the policies and practices of these different law enforcement departments that would really ensure that they're getting ahead of a potential for any bias conduct on the part of their officers in terms of their hiring procedures and in terms of their investigation procedures.

But the other thing is we have a standard practice where we're going to require all the departments to report back to us periodically [by law auditees must give progress reports at 60 days, six months, and one year] on their efforts to implement each of our recommendations. And we're going to follow up with them until that happens.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/29 National Guard training for Ukraine restarts
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-04-29/u-s-restarts-national-guard-training-mission-for-ukrainian-soldiers">https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-04-29/u-s-restarts-national-guard-training-mission-for-ukrainian-soldiers</a>

The Pentagon announced Friday that elements of the Florida National Guard had resumed their training mission with the Ukrainian military for the first time since Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered their withdrawal in the days before [the Russian invasion](#) in February.

Based now in Germany and at two other locations the Pentagon on Friday refused to specify, the trainers will continue the [8-year-old mission that previously took place at a base](#) outside the western Ukrainian city of Lviv by other deployed Guard units along with soldiers from the militaries of the U.K., Canada, Latvia and other allied countries.

Though not a dramatic policy shift in itself – U.S. trainers as of this month were already working with their Ukrainian counterparts at facilities outside Ukraine to teach them on [new weaponry the Biden administration](#) is sending into the conflict zone – the move represents a symbolic evolution in the resurging U.S. support for Ukraine despite the omnipresent risk of provoking Russia into expanding its war.

Indeed, the Guardsmen and Ukrainian soldiers had an “emotional” reunion after the mission restarted, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Friday afternoon.

“We should not forget the importance of this long-term training relationship,” Kirby said. The training, formed in the aftermath of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and occupation of eastern Ukraine in 2014, “really helped transform them off of Soviet-era doctrine and Soviet-era formation.”

The Guardsmen will continue training their Ukrainian counterparts on bases elsewhere in Europe for at least the immediate future in keeping with President Joe Biden’s policy of no direct U.S. military involvement inside Ukraine since Russia’s invasion.

The Pentagon and other elements of the U.S. government have repeatedly cited the training as among the reasons the Ukrainian military has presented a defense against the Russian invaders that appears to have surprised the Kremlin and Washington alike.

And it comes as the two-month war in Ukraine appears poised for a seismic shift. Western officials privately express concern about how Russia will proceed with its new focus on eastern Ukraine, a region known as the Donbas, which has proven to be more burdensome and deadly than expected for the troops loyal to President Vladimir Putin despite supposed geographic and logistical advantages.

Kirby said Friday that Russia appears to be behind in its plans to encircle the embattled Ukrainian forces there, which have proven much more effective at killing the invaders than Moscow expected.

“They tend to have high morale going in,” Kirby said of the Russian troops. “First contact with the enemy, that morale is shattered.”

Analysts expect the war will soon settle into one of attrition as heavy artillery and shelling from Russian territory squares off against new equipment on the Ukrainian side, specifically new long-range howitzer cannons that the U.S. and other countries are supplying and on which Ukraine’s soldiers are now training with the Guard.

The U.S. also fears the growing ruthlessness of the Russian offensive in Ukraine which increasingly uses unguided “dumb” munitions to attack targets as its supplies dwindle. Kirby, known for his staid demeanor at the podium, grew emotional during Friday’s press conference when discussing the effect – the “depravity” – of how Putin has chosen to wage war.

“I don’t think we fully appreciate the degree to which he would visit that kind of violence and cruelty, and as I said, depravity on innocent people, on non-combatants, on civilians, with such utter disregard for the lives he was taking, the lives he was flinging into refuge,” Kirby said, pausing for long moments between his statements. “There’s not even an attempt by Russia to be precise in their targeting.”



HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Taxpayers pay Sound Transit fare evasion?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3453658/dori-taxpayers-on-hook-sound-transit-fare-evasion/">https://mynorthwest.com/3453658/dori-taxpayers-on-hook-sound-transit-fare-evasion/</a>
GIST	<p>Even if you never board a local light rail train or a Sound Transit bus for the rest of your life, each Puget Sound-area family's personal share for ST's total estimated \$100 billion cost will run about \$125,000, The Dori Monson Show has calculated.</p> <p>And now, it might cost taxpayers a whole lot more.</p> <p>With already lax enforcement on rider fares and blatant disregard for paying fares running rampant throughout the region, Thursday night action by the Sound Transit Board will make it even easier to avoid paying fares.</p> <p>Why the changes? Dori asked KIRO Newsradio transportation specialist Chris "Sully" Sullivan.</p> <p>"Concern that they were disproportionately asking for payment from people of color," Sully explained.</p> <p>"For three years, they've been looking at how we can adjust our fare system so that it is more equitable – make it so people can get low-income fares, lower-priced ORCA cards," he continued. "What they have now created (is a system) that allows people to ride for free if they choose to."</p> <p>Bottom line: Sound Transit now projects it will lose about \$1.3 billion over the next 30 years at the fare box alone, Sully told Dori's listeners.</p> <p>And that, Dori points out, means the loss will need to be recovered from taxpayers.</p> <p>Listeners tell Dori they wonder why fare enforcers don't for ask for proof of ORCA cards or rider tickets. Can't these teams check whether riders have paid? Dori asked Sully.</p> <p>From a three-year ST study, Sully said, "people on the trains said they don't feel comfortable seeing King County Sheriff's deputies who (were) the fare enforcers. They didn't feel safe because it felt like it was the police state. So, they (Sound Transit) kicked (enforcers) off and they created new 'fare ambassadors' who basically have no power or authority to do anything."</p> <p>Combine that with the new multi-tiered system of warnings and fee structures approved Thursday night, Sully added, "and there is zero way to enforce it."</p> <p>These "ambassadors" may ask for proof of fare, he continued – but passengers are not required to show it. And if asked for their ID, passengers don't have to show that either – so there is no way of knowing how many violations a fare evader racks up.</p> <p>Then why would anyone even think about paying the fare, Dori wondered?</p> <p>According to Sound Transit studies, 42 to 44 percent of current riders aren't even paying the fare now, Sully told him. If you add in frequency of current fare inspection, a typical rider might take 23 trips before they would even see a fare ambassador, the same report shows.</p> <p>"Even in New York City they have turnstiles to get on the subway," Dori said. "This is the craziest public transportation system ever."</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Putin preparing Russians for NATO war?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/putin-preparing-russians-nato-war-1702308?">https://www.newsweek.com/putin-preparing-russians-nato-war-1702308?</a>

Recent threats made by Russian officials about retaliation against countries interfering in Ukraine may serve a dual purpose of warning off Western powers while also building favor among Russian citizens should a full conflict with [NATO](#) break out, according to experts.

Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) said during a Wednesday address that any countries who "create a strategic threat to Russia" during its war in Ukraine can expect "retaliatory strikes" that would be "lightning-fast." Days before, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that "NATO is essentially going to war with Russia through a proxy and arming that proxy."

[Various experts](#) who spoke with *Newsweek* recently said Russian officials have increased the amount of threatening rhetoric as a way of stoking fear in NATO allies. Some experts also feel it's an effort to win over the hearts and minds of the Russian public.

"All along, Russian domestic propaganda has emphasized that Russia is at war not with Ukraine, but with NATO and the West," Yuri Zhukov, an associate professor at the University of Michigan, told *Newsweek*. "Behind every Ukrainian military success, in this narrative, there is a NATO officer telling the Ukrainian where, when and whom to shoot."

Zhukov continued, "This framing makes it easier to explain military losses to the domestic audience. It also helps lay the political groundwork for a potential full wartime mobilization in Russia, which the regime has so far been hesitant to announce. And yes, it also creates political pressure to strike NATO targets, beginning with supply lines."

"I think from the perspective of Moscow, they want to build a case that this whole thing was started by NATO and the United States," Jonathan Katz, the director of Democracy Initiatives and a senior fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States, told *Newsweek*.

Katz added that he feels Putin is "using the boogeyman of NATO, of the United States, to justify the actions that he is taking to the Russian domestic population."

The *Financial Times* noted that when Putin brought up during his Wednesday speech having "the tools we need" for retaliatory strikes, "the likes of which no one else can claim at this point," he could have been referring to a nuclear-capable [intercontinental ballistic missile](#) that Russia had recently tested. Reuters also reported that Lavrov alluded to the danger of nuclear war during his Monday talk with state media.

President [Joe Biden](#) on Thursday [talked about such threats](#) coming from Russian officials, calling the rhetoric a sign of "desperation that Russia is feeling about their abject failure." However, John Kirby, the press secretary for the Department of Defense, on Friday said these threats are taken seriously and Putin should refrain from making incendiary remarks.

"It's completely irresponsible for a nuclear power to be saber rattling like that and blustering on about the potential use of nuclear weapons of any kind, of any size, of any yield," Kirby said during a press briefing.

He added, "We urge Russia to stop escalating the rhetoric with respect to nuclear weapons."

Zhukov said if Western countries do brush off Putin's threats, the Russian leader may feel pressured into taking more decisive action.

"There is a general impression in Europe and the U.S. that Russia's threats of retaliation are hollow," he said. "I do think it's more than likely that Russia will eventually feel compelled to conduct some kinetic action against NATO countries, if only to make its threats of retaliation appear more credible."

On Thursday, Russian missiles struck Kyiv moments after [United Nations](#) Secretary-General António Guterres reportedly finished a meeting with Ukrainian President [Volodymyr Zelensky](#) in the city. That attack, which occurred only two days after Guterres met with Putin in Moscow, also was meant as a statement, according to Katz.

	<p>The strike on Kyiv "was about sending messages to anyone that Russia is willing to take steps, including missile strikes, to deter partners of Ukraine from engaging and coming to Ukraine," Katz said.</p> <p><i>Newsweek</i> reached out to the Russian Foreign Ministry for comment.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Southwest braces extended wildfire season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/us-new-mexico-drought-wildfire-southwest">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/us-new-mexico-drought-wildfire-southwest</a>
GIST	<p>Hot, dry winds will continue to spur flames burning through the drought-stricken landscapes in the south-west and the American plains, complicating efforts to extinguish roughly a dozen destructive wildfires that have already driven thousands from their homes.</p> <p>Risks are usually higher in the region during this time of year and fire conditions typically ramp up in the months sandwiched between winter and summer rain seasons. But experts say the explosive start is an indication of what's to come in the warming months. Spiking temperatures threaten to bake more moisture out of the thirsty environments, setting the stage for ignitions to turn into infernos.</p> <p>"Climate change is taking a situation that would be bad for us normally," says Gregg Garffin, a climatologist at the University of Arizona, "and turning the dial up." Once confined to specific times of year, wildfire conditions are stretching across more months, and will likely continue until the region gets additional rain.</p> <p>More than <a href="#">a million acres have already burned</a> across the country since the start of this year, an amount more than double last year for this date, according to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). The agency's accounting also shows that more fires have ignited this year than any other in the last decade and burn totals are more than 71% higher than the ten-year average.</p> <p>Last year's exceptionally strong summer monsoon in the south-west – which delivered record rainfall in some areas – led to a lush landscape that has now begun to brown. With temperatures rising, the parched plants have turned to fuel for flames, driven faster by gusty winds. The conditions aren't expected to abate anytime soon. <a href="#">Roughly 90% of the American west</a> remains mired in drought with many areas desperately missing the winter rains they rely on to refill water-starved systems.</p> <p>"You have this desiccation going on due to climate change and you combine that with other factors," Garffin said, noting the La Niña pattern that <a href="#">delivered less winter rains</a> across areas of the west, "and it is really a year-round fire season." La Niña is a climate system that develops in the Pacific ocean and delivers more dry days across the southern third of the US. Its drought-producing effects are especially pronounced in the south-west.</p> <p>The conditions have been particularly problematic in New Mexico, <a href="#">where five large fires</a> have already burned more than 157,603 acres. The Southwest Coordination Center, the region's hub for a national coordination system that organizes information and mobilizes resources between federal and state dispatch centers, has bumped its preparedness level to four – the second highest category – noting the rising strain on local resources.</p> <p>"That is like the bat signal saying, 'hey we need help over here,'" says Candice Stevenson a public information officer at the NIFC, noting that the area may need more national resources in the south-west. The National level is currently at 2 and there are more teams available to deploy.</p> <p>With months left before its fire season typically peaks in June, <a href="#">more acres have already burned in New Mexico</a> than in seven of the last eight years. "We have been busier than we have in the past with fire activity," says Scott Overpeck, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service based in Albuquerque, comparing the start of the season to other bad drought years in 2011 and 2018. "We</p>

have been seeing the writing on the wall, in the sense that we know with the drought conditions that it is going to be a rough season.”

April is also the state’s windiest month which has spurred the spread. With no rain in the forecast, the state is bracing for strong gusts expected through next week. “It is going to depend on when these storm systems come across and increase the winds that are really going to make trouble for us,” Overpeck says. Despite the harrowing conditions, firefighters made progress on the state’s largest blaze, the The Calf canyon and Hermits peak fire. The fire, which had [already consumed more than 63,720 acres on Friday](#), was 37% contained. A red flag warning remained in effect, with wind gusts of up to 50 mph, poor relative humidity, and rising temperatures threatening to test containment lines into the weekend. Roughly 960 firefighters and other personnel battling the blaze are prioritizing the safety of structures, but hundreds of homes have already been lost and nearly 300 buildings total have been damaged or destroyed, according to New Mexico fire officials.

Conditions are not likely to improve in the coming days or weeks.

“We have a very large area from north-east New Mexico up into Colorado and western Kansas and we have designated it an extremely critical fire weather risk area,” says Bill Bunting, the chief of forecast operations at the NOAA/NWS Storm Prediction Center, noting that the dangerous combination of strong winds, low relative humidity, and dryness fuels “the rapid spread and erratic behavior of any fire that gets started”. Bunting added that this will make it “exceedingly difficult” to fight the fires already burning.

There have already been a number of high-end fire weather danger days this year, according to Bunting and the threats are expected to persist.

The NIFC has predicted an above-normal fire potential lasting through the spring in areas from the high plains through the south-west. The threats will also linger farther west, into central Oregon and northern California this spring, and will only grow there through the summer and autumn. With the snowpack waning, the agency also noted that historic water sources used for suppression might not be available.

“There will be wetting rains in some areas but overall, it does suggest that it is going to be an active fire season,” Bunting says. “It is just a reminder – you can have dangerous fire conditions any time of the year.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Mexico turns to UN; scarcity of medicines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/scarcity-of-medicines-in-mexico-leaves-trail-of-suffering-11651327200">https://www.wsj.com/articles/scarcity-of-medicines-in-mexico-leaves-trail-of-suffering-11651327200</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY—Soon after President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was elected in 2018, he said the existing system of medication purchases for public hospitals was riddled with corruption that benefited greedy healthcare firms. He promised an overhaul that would lower prices and make Mexico’s public healthcare system look like Denmark’s welfare state.</p> <p>But the government has struggled to find a fix. Instead, it has ended up buying fewer drugs at higher prices, according to Cero Desabasto, an umbrella group representing 80 organizations of doctors and patients, which recently released a 100-page report detailing widespread shortages. Mexico has now turned to hiring a United Nations agency to buy all the country’s pharmaceuticals.</p> <p>For some families, the <a href="#">revamp has been catastrophic</a>. Evan Omar Polina Aguilar was a chubby 2-year-old when he was diagnosed with malignant neuroblastoma cancer in May 2019, said his mother, Lorena Aguilar. He began chemotherapy, improved quickly, and was on his way to being cured, doctors told his desperate parents.</p> <p>Then the public hospital in Monterrey, the industrial city in northern Mexico where he was being treated, ran out of his chemotherapy medicine, Ms. Aguilar said. Evan’s family used their savings and got donations to buy part of the missing medicines—some of which cost as much as \$2,000 a dose—from</p>

private hospitals and online. But Evan missed several sessions, relapsed and died a day after Christmas of 2019, his mother said.

“My son would be alive if he had received proper treatment. It’s criminal,” said Ms. Aguilar, a 35-year-old sales agent at a security company.

Spokespeople for Mr. López Obrador and the country’s health ministry didn’t respond to requests for comment on Evan’s death, or on other criticisms leveled by healthcare experts and members of the public about his prescription-drugs policy. The hospital declined any comment and referred questions to Mexico’s health ministry.

The president has, however, admitted there are shortages of medications.

“We have to resolve the problem of scarcity [of medicines] once and for all,” Mr. López Obrador said in public comments in November. “I do not want to hear that there are no medicines, I do not want more excuses of any kind,” he said, chastising top health officials.

Despite the president’s words, Ms. Aguilar and many others blame him for the shortages of medicines, including lifesaving insulin treatments, chemotherapy drugs and hypertension medicines. The overhaul has hit the poorest Mexicans hardest because they can’t afford to pay for private healthcare.

The number of prescription medicines that patients were unable to get filled at public hospitals has soared nearly 10-fold since the president took office almost four years ago, to 24 million in the past year, according to Cero Desabasto, which cited government data from 2018 to 2021 obtained through Mexico’s transparency agency. That translates to about one in 10 prescriptions going unfilled, Cero Desabasto said.

The group’s figures were corroborated by a Wall Street Journal review of records from the Mexican Social Security Institute, or IMSS, Mexico’s largest public-health agency.

“It was a self-inflicted wound that has caused immense suffering across the country,” said Denise Tron, a consumer-protection lawyer who studied the impact of Mr. López Obrador’s actions.

Even though the president [remains popular](#), the drug shortage has hurt his standing among many poor people and is often mentioned in surveys as one of the worst problems of his presidency so far.

The mother of Evan, Ms. Aguilar, has filed a criminal complaint against Mr. López Obrador and top health officials, accusing them of homicide by negligence for the death of her child. Mexico’s attorney general’s office said it is investigating.

To raise attention to their plight, families of children with cancer who couldn’t get medicines began in 2019 blocking roads and the Mexico City airport, with protests continuing every few months.

In response, Mr. López Obrador has said such families are part of a political conspiracy organized by [the political opposition](#) and private drug companies affected by his policies.

Before Mr. López Obrador became president, the IMSS, the country’s main operator of public hospitals, bought the country’s medicines, which were then distributed to federal public hospitals and clinics. By 2017, the IMSS also bought medicines for 22 of Mexico’s 31 states and the federal district of Mexico City. In a 2018 report, the IMSS estimated the centralized purchases saved more than \$1 billion in the 2013-2018 period.

But the president argued that the system was rotten. He said three distribution firms that in turn bought medicines from hundreds of individual pharmaceutical companies and accounted for the bulk of purchases were overcharging the Mexican state. He barred the government from buying from those firms and handed purchases to the Finance Ministry, which was tasked to negotiate directly with drug companies to get discounts.

His government shut down several manufacturing plants of one of the main producers of anticancer drugs in the country, also alleging corruption. No charges, however, were ever brought against the drugmaker or the three distribution companies, and the president never offered evidence of graft.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry struggled to complete the deals, securing just 36% of needed medicines for the second half of 2019, the president's first full year, according to a pharmaceutical-industry research firm called Inefam, which provides data and advice to the industry. State governments stepped in to strike their own supply deals. In mid-2020, Mr. López Obrador hired the U.N. Office for Project Services to handle the process until 2024, the year he leaves office.

The U.N. agency says that it secured 97% of the needed medicines for the public sector in 2021. And Mr. López Obrador's government said it saved some \$500 million in drug purchases last year compared with 2018, without explaining how.

Cero Desabasto and the pharmaceutical industry dispute those figures, however, saying the government has offered no evidence to back up its claims of savings. Inefam, the research firm, said the government paid 53% more last year for medicines on average and bought 38% fewer types of medicines. It estimates the government spent 64,000 million pesos in 2021 (\$3.2 billion) compared with 67,000 million pesos in 2018, paying more for fewer drugs.

"It has been a total disaster from an economic point of view. There has been a lot of improvisation," said Enrique Martínez, the general director of Inefam.

The U.N. Office for Project Services didn't respond to requests for comment.

Getting medicines distributed to public hospitals and clinics has been a big logistical problem, analysts say. Just 44% of medicines purchased by the U.N. agency had been distributed to hospitals across the 31 states and Mexico City by mid-April, according to Insabi, a new agency created by Mr. López Obrador to provide healthcare to those who don't have access to social security.

Among the affected patients, there is a sense of helplessness, rage and grief. Rosa Mendoza, a 69-year-old widow who lives with her five cats in Mazamitla, a picturesque town in western Jalisco state, has rheumatoid arthritis and said she wasn't able to get her prescribed medicine, methotrexate, for six months. She said she has increased joint pain and fears she could lose mobility soon.

"It's always the same story. They tell you: 'Come next month, we don't have your medicines,'" she said outside the town's IMSS clinic.

Benito Serrano, a 52-year-old shopkeeper in Mexico City with Type 1 diabetes, said he got just two month's worth of his medicines in 2021. He said he spent about \$650 out of pocket last year buying his medication on the private market.

"It is shameful. I had never experienced this level of scarcity," he said at the entrance to a Mexico City public hospital.

Ms. Aguilar, Evan's mother, said she and her husband keep celebrating their child's birthday each year. They buy a birthday cake in his honor and take out the presents the boy couldn't open for Christmas in 2019. His mom preserves his clothes and toys.

"I talk to him every day," she says. "To forget him would be like accepting he died, and he will always live with us."

[Return to Top](#)



SOURCE	<a href="https://www.gazettextra.com/news/nation_world/the-phoenix-ghost-a-secretive-suicide-drone-developed-in-california-is-headed-to-ukraine/article_736436c6-ba47-5ced-a14d-8432363e5f8f.html">https://www.gazettextra.com/news/nation_world/the-phoenix-ghost-a-secretive-suicide-drone-developed-in-california-is-headed-to-ukraine/article_736436c6-ba47-5ced-a14d-8432363e5f8f.html</a>
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO — The Ukrainian military will soon begin tracking and attacking Russian forces with a secret new "suicide drone" produced by Aevex Aerospace, a little-known Solana Beach, California, company that has considerable experience with unmanned aerial systems.</p> <p>The Biden administration is sending 121 of the company's Phoenix Ghost drones to Ukraine, where they will be expected to get heavy use in the eastern part of the country. Russian forces have regrouped there and are somewhat exposed in flat, open territory similar to California's Central Valley.</p> <p>Defense analysts say it appears the Phoenix Ghost will loiter in the sky, quietly looking for targets. Once it finds one, the drone goes into a dive and rams the object, setting off its explosive warhead. Analysts speculate that it is a comparatively small weapon that could be hard to see against the cloud cover that shrouds much of Ukraine in late April and in May.</p> <p>The vehicle's specific size, shape, payloads and capabilities haven't been disclosed. Nor has any one explained the origin of the drone's name.</p> <p>The Pentagon did disclose that it began developing the vehicle before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. Such weapons can be developed quickly because some countries, notably the U.S., have deep experience with drone technology, and many of these weapons can use off-the-shelf equipment.</p> <p>"We can't talk about details," said Brian Raduenz, the (Ret). Air Force Lt. Colonel who serves as chief executive officer of Aevex Aerospace. "I have to refer you to the remarks that John Kirby made about this.</p> <p>Kirby, chief spokesman for the Pentagon, told reporters on April 21, "This unmanned aerial system is designed for tactical operations. In other words, largely, but not exclusively, to attack targets ... It can also be used to give you a site picture of what it is seeing, of course. But its principal focus is attack ...</p> <p>"Its purpose is akin to that of the Switchblade, which we have been talking about in the past, which is basically a one-way drone and attack drone. And that's essentially what this is designed to do."</p> <p>Switchblade is a quiet, light-weight, all-electric drone made by AeroVironment, a company based in Arlington, Virginia. Popular Mechanics describes it as a "flying camera robot with an explosive inside ... that will help find or attack nearby enemies, not far-away ones."</p> <p>The 5.5-pound 300 version of Switchblade can be carried in a soldier's backpack and quickly launched — making it highly useful for Ukrainian soldiers who are trying to maneuver around Russian troop and vehicles. The larger 600 version of Switchblade is being used to destroy Russian tanks and armored vehicles, many which litter roads in the Donbas region of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Biden administration says it has provided at least 1,000 Switchblades to Ukraine. The country also is using the much larger Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, which pack laser-guided missiles.</p> <p>Although Raduenz declined to discuss Phoenix Ghost in detail, it appears that Aevex Aerospace has considerable technical expertise. It works with the San Diego County division of General Atomics, the maker of some famous unmanned — and much larger — aerial vehicles as the Predator and Reaper drones.</p> <p>Aevex has about 600 workers, some of whom deploy overseas to help the company's military and commercial customers.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Suicides: 5 Russia businessmen 3mo.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/29/europe/russian-oligarchs-suicides-intl/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/29/europe/russian-oligarchs-suicides-intl/index.html</a>

## GIST

At least five prominent [Russian businessmen](#) have reportedly died by suicide since late January, with three of them allegedly killing members of their families before taking their own lives.

Four of the dead men were associated with the Russian state-owned energy giant [Gazprom](#) or one of its subsidiaries.

CNN's calls to Gazprom have not been returned.

A top executive at Gazprom was found dead in his cottage in the village of Leninsky near Leningrad on January 30, 2022, according to Russian state media RIA Novosti.

RIA reported that a suicide note was found at the scene and that the investigators were investigating the death as a suicide. Russian national broadcaster RenTv has identified the man as Leonid Shulman, the head of transport at Gazprom Invest.

Just a month after that, another top executive at Gazprom was found dead in the same village.

Alexander Tyulakov was found dead in his garage on February 25, according to Novaya Gazeta, an independent Russian newspaper. Novaya Gazeta reported he died by suicide.

CNN has asked Russia's Investigative Committee for comment on the two cases but has not received a response.

Mikhail Watford, a Ukrainian-born Russian billionaire, was found dead in his home in Surrey, England on February 28.

Surrey Police told CNN that the death is being investigated by the coroner, who said a hearing will be held on July 29.

Another Russian businessman, Vasily Melnikov, was found dead alongside his family in Nizhny Novgorod in late March, according to the Russian newspaper Kommersant.

Melnikov owned MedStom, a medical supplies company. According to Russia's Investigative Committee, a 43-year-old man, his wife, 41, and two children aged four and 10 were found stabbed to death on March 23.

The committee did not name Melnikov, but the ages of the dead and the location of the incident match the Kommersant report.

The regional branch of the investigative committee has not updated the status of its investigation and did not return CNN's request for comment. At the time of the incident, in March, it said there "were no signs of unauthorized entry into the apartment," and "knives were found and seized."

"[Investigators] are considering several versions of what happened, including the murder of the children and wife by the head of the family, followed by self-inflicted death," the committee said.

And earlier this month, two more Russian businessmen died in apparent murder-suicide incidents.

Vladislav Avayev, the former vice-president of Gazprombank, was found dead with his wife and daughter in his Moscow apartment on April 18, according to Russian state news agency Tass.

Citing a source in law enforcement, Tass claimed authorities were investigating the Avayevs' deaths as a murder-suicide.

Yulia Ivanova, a representative of the Investigative Committee for Moscow, was quoted by Tass as saying that a relative discovered the Avayevs' bodies after being told by the family driver and the nanny that they could not contact them on the phone or get into the apartment, since the door was closed from the inside.

Igor Volobuev, former VP of Gazprombank, who has recently left Russia for Ukraine, told CNN he did not believe Avayev killed himself.

"His job was to deal with private banking, that means dealing with VIP clients. He was in charge of very large amounts of money. So, did he kill himself? I don't think so. I think he knew something and that he posed some sort of risk," Volobuev told CNN.

Just a day later, on April 19, Sergey Protosenya, former executive at the gas producer Novatek, which is partially owned by Gazprom, was found dead north of Barcelona. The bodies of his wife and daughter were found nearby, an official source close to the investigation told CNN last week.

Protosenya, his wife and daughter were found at their home in Lloret de Mar, a Mediterranean resort near Barcelona.

The bodies of the two women, showing signs of having suffered violence, were found inside the family's luxury home, and the body of Protosenya was found in the garden outside, according to the source. The case is being investigated as a double-murder and subsequent suicide in a domestic violence case.

Speaking to the Daily Mail, Protosenya's son questioned the version of the events, suggesting instead his father was murdered.

"He loved my mother and especially Maria my sister. She was his princess. He could never do anything to harm them. I don't know what happened that night but I know that my dad did not hurt them," said Fedor Protosenya, who was at the family home in France at the time of the incident.

Catalan police in the province of Girona, where the town of Lloret de Mar is located, told CNN on Friday that "the hypothesis continues to be a domestic violence case despite the statements by the son."

"The Catalan police have taken statements from the son. Other hypotheses have been ruled out. Also ruled out was a triple homicide," the police's press official told CNN.

"That this was the work of the Russian mafia? Well, no," the official added.

Novatek, Protosenya's former employer, said he was "a wonderful person and a wonderful family man."

"Unfortunately, there have been speculations on this topic in the media, but we are convinced that these speculations are not related to reality. We hope that the law enforcement agencies of Spain will conduct a thorough and objective investigation and sort out what happened," the company said in a statement.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/30 Recall: Ford Explorers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/30/business/ford-explorer-recall-rollaway/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/30/business/ford-explorer-recall-rollaway/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Up to a quarter million Ford Explorers are being recalled due to a mechanical problem that can cause the SUV to roll away while it's parked, according to documents from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.</p> <p>The document said a bolt in the rear axle mounting could fracture and cause the driveshaft to disconnect, increasing the risk of the vehicle accidentally rolling away while parked when the parking brake is not on.</p>

	<p>Affected vehicles include various 2020-2022 Explorer models, including the Explorer Hybrid and Explorer Plug-In Hybrid. Some 2020-2021 Explorer Police Interceptor SUV and hybrid models are also affected by the recall.</p> <p>The NHTSA said dealers will replace any necessary parts or update the electronic parking brake software free of charge. Owners are expected to be notified through the mail beginning on June 6.</p> <p>Ford did not immediately respond for a request for comment.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/01 Turkey: dozens detained May Day protests</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-police-detain-dozens-may-day-demonstrations-2022-05-01/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-police-detain-dozens-may-day-demonstrations-2022-05-01/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>ISTANBUL, May 1 (Reuters) - Turkish riot police detained dozens of protesters trying to reach Istanbul's main Taksim Square for May Day demonstrations against economic hardship caused by raging inflation.</p> <p>The Istanbul governor's office had allowed May Day celebrations to be held in another district and deemed gatherings in all other locations as unauthorised and illegal.</p> <p>A Reuters journalist saw riot police brawling with and handcuffing protesters, images of which were shown on television by domestic broadcasters.</p> <p>Police also detained 30 people in central Besiktas and 22 others in Sisli districts, the Demiroren News Agency reported.</p> <p>A statement from the Istanbul governor's office on Sunday said that 164 protesters had been detained across the city for "attempting to hold illegal demonstrations".</p> <p>Marches led by workers and unions are held on May 1 every year as part of International Labour Day celebrations in many countries.</p> <p>Turkey's annual inflation rate is expected to rise to 68% in April, driven higher by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and rising commodity prices, receding only slightly by the end of the year, a Reuters poll showed on Thursday.</p> <p>The soaring inflation and the economic hardship it causes were cited in May Day statements from several groups.</p> <p>"Our main theme this year had to be cost of living," the head of the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (Turk-Is), Ergun Atalay, said as he placed a wreath in Taksim Square and demanded that minimum wages be adjusted monthly to reflect rising prices.</p> <p>"Inflation is announced at the beginning of each month. The inflation rate should be added to wages every month," he said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/01 Omicron subvariants trigger new wave?</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covids-new-omicron-sub-lineages-can-dodge-immunity-past-infection-study-2022-05-01/">https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covids-new-omicron-sub-lineages-can-dodge-immunity-past-infection-study-2022-05-01/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>JOHANNESBURG, May 1 (Reuters) - Two new sublineages of the Omicron coronavirus variant can dodge antibodies from earlier infection well enough to trigger a new wave, but are far less able to thrive in the blood of people vaccinated against COVID-19, South African scientists have found.</p>

	<p>The scientists from multiple institutions were examining Omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 sublineages - which the World Health Organization last month added to its monitoring list. They took blood samples from 39 participants previously infected by Omicron when it first showed up at the end of last year.</p> <p>Fifteen were vaccinated - eight with Pfizer's shot; seven with J&amp;J's -- while the other 24 were not.</p> <p>"The vaccinated group showed about a 5-fold higher neutralisation capacity ... and should be better protected," said the study, a pre-print of which was released over the weekend.</p> <p>In the unvaccinated samples, there was an almost eightfold decrease in antibody production when exposed to BA.4 and BA.5, compared with the original BA.1 Omicron lineage. Blood from the vaccinated people showed a threefold decrease.</p> <p>South Africa may be entering a fifth COVID wave earlier than expected, officials and scientists said on Friday, blaming a sustained rise in infections that seems to be driven by the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron sub-variants.</p> <p>Only about 30% of South Africa's population of 60 million is fully vaccinated.</p> <p>"Based on neutralisation escape, BA.4 and BA.5 have potential to result in a new infection wave," the study said.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Beijing shuts dine-in services</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-china-beijing-59725794a57d12362d60f441c2884581">https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-china-beijing-59725794a57d12362d60f441c2884581</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Restaurants in Beijing have been ordered to close dine-in services over the May holidays as <a href="#">the Chinese capital grapples</a> with a COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>Authorities said at a news conference Saturday that dining in restaurants has become an infection risk, citing virus transmissions between diners and staff.</p> <p>Restaurants have been ordered to only provide takeout services from Sunday to Wednesday, during China's Labor Day holidays.</p> <p>Beijing began mass testing millions of residents earlier this week as it scrambled to stamp out a <a href="#">growing COVID-19 outbreak</a>.</p> <p>The political stakes are high as the ruling Communist Party prepares for a major congress this fall at which President Xi Jinping is seeking a third five-year term to reassert his position as China's unquestioned leader.</p> <p>Beijing authorities reported 67 new infections on Saturday, taking the city's total to nearly 300 since April 22.</p> <p>Authorities have also ordered parks, scenic areas and entertainment venue to operate at half capacity during the holiday period. Schools have also been ordered closed.</p> <p>Several communities in the city's most populous Chaoyang district have been designated high-risk areas and will be subjected to mass testing on Sunday and Tuesday.</p> <p>Beijing is trying to prevent a massive outbreak that could trigger a citywide lockdown like the one that has paralyzed Shanghai for more than three weeks. Millions of residents there have been under lockdown and food has run low at times, prompting heavy criticism despite government efforts to censor it.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	04/30 'Rolling Thunder' protest rumbles in Ottawa
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/canada-arrests-ottawa-justin-trudeau-8b4c5180d94d4dff3a3d6b3da01f7dcb">https://apnews.com/article/canada-arrests-ottawa-justin-trudeau-8b4c5180d94d4dff3a3d6b3da01f7dcb</a>
GIST	<p>OTTAWA (AP) — Motorcycles rumbled through the streets of Canada's capital city Saturday while a strong police presence kept a close eye on a couple of rallies during the "Rolling Thunder" protest.</p> <p>Many of the protesters involved in a morning service at the National War Memorial and a later rally on Parliament Hill were also involved in the "Freedom Convoy" that shuttered downtown Ottawa for weeks in February.</p> <p>Police made a handful of arrests Saturday, including a driver who allegedly tried to jump onto a sidewalk to get around officers. Police arrested the person for dangerous driving and found them in breach of their bail conditions related to the previous protest, when they were ordered not to return to Ottawa.</p> <p>Ottawa By-law and Regulatory Services said more than 560 tickets have been handed out for parking violations, smoking, noise and encumbering a highway, and 39 vehicles have been towed since Friday morning.</p> <p>Hundreds of demonstrators gathered at the National War Memorial which was a focal point during the early days of the February protests.</p> <p>Supporters watched retired Afghanistan veteran Christopher Deering lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in a quasi-remembrance ceremony.</p> <p>Other speakers expressed their opposition to vaccine mandates, COVID-19 restrictions and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government. Supporters were asked to remove slogans with expletives aimed at the prime minister for the event.</p> <p>A small group of counter-protesters gathered across the street from the memorial chanting "go home" at the protesters.</p> <p>Police formed a line in between the two groups to keep the peace.</p> <p>At the end of the service, the crowd marched down Elgin Street to greet a convoy of around 150 motorcycles traveling on a route outlined by police.</p> <p>Police stopped the motorcycle convoy two blocks from the National War Memorial, and had the motorcyclists travel back out of the core on a designated route.</p> <p>Later, protesters gathered on Parliament Hill. Some danced on the street in front of parliament shouting "freedom!"</p> <p>The protest in February lasted three weeks, as big-rigs and other trucks embedded themselves in front of Parliament Hill and set up encampments that blocked traffic. The federal government invoked the Emergencies Act in an effort to dislodge them and similar protesters who blockaded border crossings.</p> <p>This weekend Ottawa police called in more than 800 reinforcements from RCMP and other police services who blocked off highway exits and every street into the core to prevent a new encampment from forming.</p> <p>Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson said police took "a strong stance" to prevent the kind of prolonged demonstration that gripped Ottawa in February.</p> <p>Saturday's events were relatively peaceful compared to an altercation between police and protesters Friday evening, when officers arrested seven people and faced off with what they described as an "aggressive crowd" just outside the parliamentary precinct.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	



HEADLINE	<b>05/01 China 'zero Covid' rules curb May 1 travel</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-travel-holidays-restaurants-6086bd35b9532ba57c3858da7f0bae0b">https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-travel-holidays-restaurants-6086bd35b9532ba57c3858da7f0bae0b</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Only a few people strolled the pedestrian-only streets Sunday in central Beijing's historic Qianmen district, normally an area that would be bustling with tourists on what was a national holiday and a sunny spring day.</p> <p>Many Chinese marked a quiet May Day this year as the government's "zero-COVID" approach restricts travel and enforces lockdowns in multiple cities. Millions remain restricted to their buildings or compounds in Shanghai, China's largest city, under a lockdown that has only slightly eased.</p> <p>Under an order announced the previous afternoon, all Beijing restaurants were closed to dine-in customers Sunday and can offer only takeout and delivery through the end of the national holiday on Wednesday. Parks and tourist attractions in the Chinese capital are limited to half capacity. The Universal Studios theme park, which opened last year, said it had shut down temporarily.</p> <p>In Qianmen, the touristy neighborhood around the street that leads to the imposing gates of the former imperial palace, some people bought food from stalls and ate on outdoor benches. Wang Liying said sales at her noodle and stir-fry restaurant have plunged 98% during the holiday compared to last year.</p> <p>"The remaining 2% is very little for us," she said. "There is not much we can do with the pandemic."</p> <p>The virus situation varies across the vast nation of 1.4 billion people, but the Transport Ministry said last week that it expected 100 million trips to be taken from Saturday to Wednesday, which would be down 60% from last year. Many of those who are traveling are staying within their province as local governments discourage or restrict cross-border travel to try to keep out new infections.</p> <p>China is sticking to a strict "zero-COVID" policy even as many other countries are easing restrictions and seeing if they can live with the virus. Much of Shanghai — a finance, manufacturing and shipping hub — remains locked down, disrupting people's lives and dealing a blow to the economy.</p> <p>The major outbreak in Shanghai, where the death toll has topped 400, appears to be easing. The city recorded about 7,200 new locally transmitted cases on Saturday, down from a peak of 27,605 on April 13. Outside of Shanghai, only 364 new cases were found in the rest of mainland China.</p> <p>Beijing, which has tallied 350 cases in the past nine days, is restricting activity to try to prevent a large outbreak and avoid a citywide lockdown similar to Shanghai. Individual buildings and housing complexes with coronavirus cases have been sealed off. Gyms and theaters have been closed for the holiday period. Visitors to many office buildings and tourist sites such as the Great Wall must show proof of a negative COVID-19 test within the previous 48 hours.</p> <p>Epidemic prevention and control are at the most critical juncture in Beijing, said Pang Xinghuo, deputy head of the city's disease prevention center. While most of the new cases are among people under quarantine, some have been found in the broader community, Peng said. Beijing is conducting repeated rounds of mass testing to find and isolate any infected people.</p> <p>Online booking agency Ctrip said last week that people were booking travel to cities that were mostly free of the virus, such as Chengdu in Sichuan province and nearby Chongqing. Other popular destinations included Wuhan, where the world's first major outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in early 2020. About half the orders on the Ctrip platform were for travel within a province.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Public schools' headcounts, budgets down</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/headcounts-public-schools-now-budgets-84414848">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/headcounts-public-schools-now-budgets-84414848</a>
GIST	MISSION, Kan. -- A school system in suburban Kansas City is eliminating over 100 jobs, including kindergarten aides and library clerks. Oakland, California, is closing seven schools. Other districts around

the country are merging classrooms, selling buildings and leaving teaching positions unfilled in order to close budget gaps.

Public school systems are beginning to feel the pinch from enrollment losses tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

Money for schools is driven partly by student headcounts, and emergency provisions in many states allowed schools to maintain funding at pre-pandemic levels. But like the billions of dollars of federal relief money that have helped schools weather the crisis, those measures were not meant to last forever.

In Olathe, Kansas, where the school system is cutting 140 jobs, Deputy Superintendent John Hutchison said the extra federal money merely put off the inevitable.

Now it is trimming millions of dollars from its budgets because enrollment, having peaked at more than 30,000 students in fall 2019, fell by around 900 in the first full school year of the pandemic. Less than 100 of those students have returned.

“Where did those kids go?” Hutchison asked during a recent public meeting. “Where are they? They didn’t come back this year. That’s what’s laying on that additional reduction in our funding.”

Families opting for homeschooling, private schools and other options sent enrollment down sharply in the first full school year of the pandemic, and generally it has been slow to recover.

In Houston, the largest district in Texas, enrollment tumbled by more than 22,000 to around 183,000 in fall 2021 and only about half of those students have returned. The district was shielded from making cuts in the first two years of the pandemic by what are known as “hold harmless” provisions, but those protections are expected to end. Superintendent Millard House has asked departments to cut \$60 million from next year’s budget.

Among other states that took steps to protect school budgets, Delaware provided \$9.3 million in one-time funding in the fiscal year that ended in summer 2021 to school districts and charter schools to prevent layoffs over enrollment declines, and North Carolina lawmakers decided to allow schools to use pre-pandemic attendance levels.

More districts will be making cuts in coming years, said Alex Spurrier, an associate partner at Bellwether Education Partners, a think tank. The last of the federal aid must be spent by 2024.

“Once the federal funding dries up, it will put a lot more districts in a lot more difficult position if they’re kind of kicking the can down the road of making the adjustments that they’ll need if they are going to be serving smaller student populations in the years to come,” he said.

Some districts have struggled to explain the need for cuts. Albuquerque Public Schools announced this spring that it anticipates a budget shortfall of about \$25 million.

“That might sound crazy,” the district wrote in a blog post, acknowledging the influx of federal aid. But it explained that enrollment declines have accelerated amid the pandemic, with the student population falling to 73,000 from 85,000 in just six years. The district hasn’t released a cost-cutting plan but legislative analysts say it will require layoffs and school closures.

Amid the upheaval, some states have gained students. Florida was among the leaders, according to the data-tracking site Burbio. And some districts’ headcounts benefited from new families, including some who moved to less costly areas as work went virtual.

In California, which announced this month that enrollment had fallen by an additional 110,283 students, Oakland’s planned school closures are leading to protests. The ACLU filed a complaint this month alleging that they disproportionately affect Black students and families.

Further complicating the situation is a tight labor market and demands for teacher and staff raises.

In Minneapolis Public Schools, where a nearly three-week long teacher strike ended with a new contract, the district said it needed to make \$27.1 million in budget cuts in the upcoming school year to pay for it. Federal relief money helped cover the \$53.5 million price tag for the more lucrative contract for teachers and support staff for the current school year. Since the pandemic began, the district also has lost more than 4,000 students, along with the state funding they generate.

School officials in the city of Lawrence — home to the main University of Kansas campus — are creating multi-grade level elementary classrooms, which will allow the district to get by with fewer teachers. It is part of an effort to close a budget shortfall brought on by declining enrollment and to free up money for raises.

“You can’t cut close to \$7 million and not change how you do business,” Lawrence Superintendent Anthony Lewis acknowledged at a meeting this month.

In Iowa, the Des Moines district canceled a conference, sold a building and isn’t replacing some retiring teachers as it cuts \$9.4 million in spending for the upcoming school year. The cuts were needed partially because the district’s enrollment has fallen by 1,600 students since the pandemic began.

The district, which is the state’s largest with 31,000 students, anticipates that it will need to make even deeper cuts next year.

“I think it’s fair to say, the federal aid helped offset some of the financial challenges,” said Phil Roeder, a spokesman for the district. “It did help to get us through what’s been a historically bad moment in history. But it was a temporary, stopgap, not a long-term solution for school districts.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukrainian women train to clear landmines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/30/a-huge-demand-ukrainian-women-train-to-clear-landm/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/30/a-huge-demand-ukrainian-women-train-to-clear-landm/</a>
GIST	<p>PEJA, Kosovo (AP) — Learning to identify and defuse explosives is something Anastasiia Minchukova never thought she would have to do as an English teacher in Ukraine. Yet there she was wearing a face shield, armed with a landmine detector and venturing into a field dotted with danger warnings.</p> <p>Russia’s war in Ukraine took Minchukova, 20, and five other women to Kosovo, where they are attending a hands-on course in clearing landmines and other dangers that may remain hidden across their country once combat ends.</p> <p>“There is a huge demand on people who know how to do demining because the war will be over soon,” Minchukova said. “We believe there is so much work to be done.”</p> <p>The 18-day training camp takes place at a range in the western town of Peja where a Malta-based company regularly offers courses for job-seekers, firms working in former war zones, humanitarian organizations and government agencies.</p> <p>Kosovo was the site of a devastating 1998-99 armed conflict between ethnic Albanian separatists and Serbian forces that killed about 13,000 people and left thousands of unexploded mines in need of clearing. Praedium Consulting Malta’s range includes bombed and derelict buildings as well as expanses of vegetation.</p> <p>Instructor Artur Tigani, who tailored the curriculum to reflect Ukraine’s environment, said he was glad to share his small Balkan nation’s experience with the Ukrainian women. Though 23 years have passed, “it’s still fresh in our memories, the difficulties we met when we started clearance in Kosovo,” Tigani said.</p>

Tigani is a highly trained and experienced mine operations officer who served as an engineer in the former Yugoslav army during the 1980s. He has been deployed in his native Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda and Kenya, and conducted training missions in Syria and Iraq.

During a class last week, he took his trainees through a makeshift minefield before moving to an improvised outdoor classroom featuring a huge board with various samples of explosives and mines.

While it is impossible to assess how littered with mines and unexploded ordnance Ukraine is at the moment, the aftermaths of other conflicts suggest the problem will be huge.

“In many parts of the world, explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim thousands of civilians each year during and long after active hostilities have ended. The majority of victims are children,” the International Committee of the Red Cross testified at a December U.N. conference.

“Locating (unexploded ordnance) in the midst of rubble and picking them out from among a wide array of everyday objects, many of which are made of similar material is a dangerous, onerous and often extremely time-consuming task,” the Red Cross said.

Mine Action Review, a Norwegian organization that monitors clearance efforts worldwide, reported that 56 countries were contaminated with unexploded ordnance as of October, with Afghanistan, Cambodia and Iraq carrying the heaviest burdens, followed by Angola, Bosnia, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen.

Thousands of civilians are believed to have died in Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. Russian forces have bombed cities and towns across the country, reducing many to rubble.

Military analysts say it appears Russian forces have employed anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, while Ukraine has used anti-tank mines to try to prevent the Russians from gaining ground.

With Ukrainian men from 18 to 60 years old prohibited from leaving their country and most engaged in defending it, the women wanted to help any way they could despite the risks involved in mine clearing.

“It’s dangerous all over Ukraine, even if you are in a relatively safe region,” said Minchukova, who is from central Ukraine.

Another Ukrainian student, Yuliia Katelik, 38, took her three children to safety in Poland early in the war. She went back to Ukraine and then joined the demining training to help make sure it’s safe for her children when they return home to the eastern city of Kramatorsk, where a rocket attack on a crowded train station killed more than 50 people this month.

Katelik said her only wish is to reunite with her family and see “the end of this nightmare.” Knowing how to spot booby-traps that could shatter their lives again is a necessary skill, she said.

“Acutely, probably as a mother, I do understand that there is a problem and it’s quite serious, especially for the children,” Katelik said.

Minchukova, wearing military-style clothes, said she was doubtful that normal life, as they all knew it before the war, will ever fully return.

“What am I missing? Peace,” she said. “I’m dreaming about peace, about sleeping in my bed not worried about going to bomb shelters all the time. I miss the people I lost.”

The Kosovo training center plans to work with more groups of Ukrainian women, both in Peja and in Ukraine.

“We’re planning as well to go to Ukraine very soon and start with delivery of courses there, on the theater” of war, Tigani said.

HEADLINE	05/01 House speaker, delegation visit Kyiv
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/01/russia-ukraine-war-news-putin-live-updates/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/01/russia-ukraine-war-news-putin-live-updates/</a> <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pelosi-visits-kyiv-meets-ukraine-president-84423919">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pelosi-visits-kyiv-meets-ukraine-president-84423919</a>
GIST	<p>House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) made <a href="#">a surprise trip</a> to Kyiv, telling embattled Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday that “our commitment is to be there for you until the fight is done.” Pelosi, the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Ukraine since Russia’s invasion, led a congressional delegation to the Ukrainian capital.</p> <p>Pelosi walked the streets of Kyiv with several House Democratic lawmakers, including Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Gregory W. Meeks (N.Y.) and Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern (Mass.). The delegation, which met Zelensky on Saturday evening local time, later left Ukraine for Poland to meet with President Andrzej Duda. In Kyiv, Zelensky awarded Pelosi with the Order of Princess Olga, a decoration bestowed upon women who have made outstanding contributions to Ukraine. “Thank you for helping to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our state!” he wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>In southeastern Ukraine, civilian evacuations from a steel plant in Mariupol that has been the last base for Ukrainian fighters in the besieged port city were expected to continue Sunday, after a group of about 20 women and children were <a href="#">allowed to leave</a> under a cease-fire that began Saturday. Ukrainian officials think up to 1,000 people have taken shelter at the complex, which has been pummeled by Russian strikes in the Kremlin’s bid to secure Mariupol, an industrial center on the Sea of Azov that is seen as <a href="#">a strategic prize</a> for Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p> <hr/> <p>KYIV, Ukraine -- U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has led a congressional delegation to Kyiv to meet with Ukraine's president before heading to Poland for talks with officials there on Sunday.</p> <p>Pelosi, a California Democrat who is second in line to the presidency after the vice president, is the most senior American lawmaker to visit Ukraine since Russia's war began more than two months ago. Her visit to Kyiv on Saturday marks a major show of continuing support for the country's struggle against Moscow.</p> <p>“Our delegation traveled to Kyiv to send an unmistakable and resounding message to the entire world: America stands firmly with Ukraine,” Pelosi said in a statement released Sunday.</p> <p>Footage released by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s office showed Pelosi and other U.S. legislators in Kyiv. In video later released by Pelosi’s office, the speaker and Zelenskyy both thanked each other for their support in the war.</p> <p>“We’ll win and we’ll win together,” Zelenskyy said.</p> <p>Pelosi added: “We are here until victory is won.”</p> <p>The full congressional delegation included Democratic Reps. Gregory Meeks of New York who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Adam Schiff, of California who chairs the House Intelligence Committee; Jim McGovern of Massachusetts who chairs the House Rules Committee; Jason Crow of Colorado; Barbara Lee of California; and Bill Keating of Massachusetts.</p> <p>“You all are welcome,” Zelenskyy told the delegation.</p> <p>Pelosi told Zelenskyy: “We believe that we are visiting you to say thank you for your fight for freedom.”</p> <p>“We are on a frontier of freedom and your fight is a fight for everyone. Our commitment is to be there for you until the fight is done,” Pelosi added.</p>

The visit wasn't previously announced.

The delegation continued its trip in southeast Poland, and Pelosi said they would later visit the capital, Warsaw, to meet with President Andrzej Duda and other senior officials. Poland has received more than 3 million refugees from Ukraine since Russia launched its war on Feb. 24.

“We look forward to thanking our Polish allies for their dedication and humanitarian efforts,” she said.

In a news conference in Poland, Pelosi said she and others in the delegation applauded the courage of the Ukrainian people. She added that the delegation brought Zelenskyy “a message of appreciation from the American people for his leadership.”

Schiff said the U.S. lawmakers had a three-hour meeting with Zelenskyy and his administration, talking about sanctions, weapons and aid assistance. Schiff promised that intelligence sharing would continue between Ukraine and the U.S.

“This is a struggle of freedom against tyranny,” Schiff said. “And in that struggle, Ukraine is on the front lines.”

McGovern said Russia's war had repercussions far beyond Ukraine, saying it was exacerbating a food crisis that would be disastrous for poor people across the globe.

“Putin’s brutal war is no longer only a war against the people of Ukraine,” McGovern said. “It’s also a war against the world’s most vulnerable.”

He added that Ukraine is a “breadbasket of the world.”

“I don’t think that Putin cares if he starves the world,” McGovern said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Cracks emerge among Russia’s elite</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/29/russia-oligarchs-ukraine-invasion-dissent/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/29/russia-oligarchs-ukraine-invasion-dissent/</a>
GIST	<p>In the two months since Russia invaded Ukraine, the silence — and even acquiescence — of the Russian elite has started to fray.</p> <p>Even as opinion polls report overwhelming public support for the military campaign, amid pervasive state propaganda and new laws outlawing criticism of the war, cracks are starting to show. The dividing lines among factions of the Russian economic elite are becoming more marked, and some of the tycoons — especially those who made their fortunes before President Vladimir Putin came to power — have begun, tentatively, to speak.</p> <p>For many, the most immediate focus has been their own woes. Sweeping sanctions imposed by the West have brought down a new iron curtain on the Russian economy, freezing tens of billions of dollars of many of the tycoons’ assets along the way.</p> <p>“In one day, they destroyed what was built over many years. It’s a catastrophe,” said one businessman who was summoned along with many of the country’s other richest men to meet Putin on the day of the invasion.</p> <p>The White House further turned the screws on the oligarchs Thursday, announcing <a href="#">a proposal to liquidate their assets</a> and donate the proceeds to Ukraine.</p> <p>At least four oligarchs who made it big in the more liberal era of Putin’s predecessor, President Boris Yeltsin, have left Russia. At least four senior officials have resigned their posts and departed the country,</p>



the highest ranking among them being Anatoly Chubais, the Kremlin special envoy for sustainable development and Yeltsin-era privatization czar.

But those in top positions vital to the continued running of the country remain — some trapped, unable to leave even if they wanted to. Most notably, Russia's mild-mannered and highly regarded central bank chief, Elvira Nabiullina, tendered her resignation after the imposition of Western sanctions, but Putin refused to let her step down, according to five people familiar with the situation.

In interviews, several Russian billionaires, senior bankers, a senior official and former officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, described how they and others had been blindsided by their increasingly isolated president and feel largely impotent to influence him because his inner circle is dominated by a handful of hard-line security officials.

The complaints aired in public so far are mostly muted and focused primarily on the government's proposed economic response to the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West. No one has directly criticized Putin.

Vladimir Lisin, a steel magnate who made his fortune in the Yeltsin years, slammed a proposal in the Russian parliament to counter sanctions by forcing foreign buyers to pay in rubles for a list of commodities beyond gas. In an interview with a Moscow newspaper, he said the measure risked undermining export markets that Russia "fought for for decades," warning that "a transfer to payments in rubles will just lead to us being thrown out of international markets."

Vladimir Potanin, the owner of the Norilsk Nickel metals plant who was an architect of Russia's privatizations in the 1990s, warned that proposals to confiscate the assets of foreign companies that exited Russia in the wake of the war would destroy investor confidence and throw the country back to the revolution of 1917.

Oleg Deripaska, an aluminum tycoon who also made his initial fortune during the Yeltsin era, has gone furthest, calling the war in Ukraine "insanity," though he too has focused on the invasion's economic toll. He has predicted that the economic crisis resulting from the sanctions would be three times worse than the 1998 financial crisis that rocked the Russian economy, and he has thrown down the gauntlet to the Putin regime, saying its state capitalism policies of the past 14 years have "led neither to economic growth nor to the growth of the population's incomes."

In a subsequent post on his Telegram channel, Deripaska wrote that the current "armed conflict" was "a madness for which we will long be ashamed of." In the next sentence, however, he indicated the West was equally to blame for a "hellish ideological mobilization from all sides."

### **'We've lost everything'**

When 37 of Russia's wealthiest business executives were called to the Kremlin for the meeting with Putin hours after he launched the war on Feb. 24, many of them were depressed and shocked. "Everyone was in a terrible mood," one participant said. "Everyone was sitting there crushed."

"I'd never seen them as stunned as they were," another participant said. "Some of them could not even speak."

They'd been kept waiting, as usual, for more than two hours before the president appeared in the Kremlin's ornate Ekaterininsky Hall — ample time to consider their fate. For some of the executives, as they quietly discussed the consequences of Putin's war, it was the moment they realized that it was all over for the business empires they'd been building since Russia's market transition began more than 30 years ago.

"Some of them said, 'We've lost everything,' " one of the participants said.

When the president arrived, no one dared issue a whimper of protest. Stone-faced, they listened as Putin assured everyone Russia would remain part of global markets — a promise soon made hollow by the series of Western sanctions — and told them he'd had no other choice than to launch his "special military operation."

Since then, Putin has ratcheted up threats against anyone criticizing the war, hastily issuing new laws that include a potential 15-year prison sentence for anyone saying anything the Kremlin deems false about the Russian military. His administration has proposed instituting a new system of deputies in Russia's ministries to report back to the Kremlin on the "emotional climate and mood." One tycoon said he expected the coming crackdown to be "cannibalistic" compared with the "vegetarian period" of previous years.

Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion appears to have stunned not just the billionaires but the breadth of the Russian elite, including senior technocratic officials and some members of the security services, according to two of the Russian billionaires and a well-connected Moscow-based former state official.

"Apart from those directly involved in the preparations, [Defense Minister Sergei] Shoigu, [chief of the army's general staff Valery] Gerasimov, and some from the FSB, no one knew," said one of the billionaires.

Despite the escalating warnings by U.S. intelligence, many in the Moscow elite had believed Putin was limiting his aims to the separatist areas of eastern Ukraine. Economic and financial officials "thought it would be limited to action in Donetsk and Luhansk and this is what they had prepared for," the senior official said. They had prepared for Western sanctions, including a suspension from Swift, the international financial messaging system, he said, "but they hadn't prepared for this."

With casualties mounting and Russian troops forced to turn back from Kyiv, the war is now being viewed with increasing dismay not just by billionaires sanctioned by the West but even by some members of the security establishment, according to two people with knowledge of the situation.

One referred specifically to Shoigu, who took part in the war preparations. "They all want to have a normal life. They have homes, children, grandchildren. They don't need war," this person said. "They're all not suicidal. They all want to have a good life. They want their children to have everything and be able to travel to the most beautiful places."

The mounting pressure on their foreign bank accounts is a source of particular chagrin for the elite. Even officials who tried to protect themselves by moving their money into accounts belonging to business partners now find that these accounts are blocked, one of the Moscow executives said.

### **Trapped in Moscow**

Western sanctions to freeze \$300 billion — or nearly half — of the Central Bank of Russia's hard currency reserves left Moscow reeling, including central bank governor Nabiullina, whose resignation attempt was rejected by Putin, according to the five people familiar with the situation. (Bloomberg News first reported her attempt to resign.)

Nabiullina "understands very well she can't just leave. Otherwise, it will end very badly for her," one of these people said.

"No one can say 'That's it' and then slam the door," said Vadim Belyaev, the exiled former main owner of Otkritie, Russia's biggest private bank until its takeover by the state in 2017. "Everyone will continue working right up to the next Hague tribunal," he said, referring to a possible war crimes trial. The central bank has denied that Nabiullina tried to resign.

Only those officials who are superfluous to the running of the state — and are relative outsiders — have been allowed to leave, economists said. “No minister is allowed to step down,” said Maxim Mironov, an associate professor at IE University in Spain. “It is like a mafia.”

If Nabiullina epitomizes Moscow’s senior technocratic officials, then Alexei Kudrin is the one closest to Putin. Kudrin — a former member of Putin’s inner circle from St. Petersburg who served as finance minister for the first two terms of his presidency — also appears to be among those unable to step down.

One person close to Kudrin said he met with Putin a month before the invasion. Although it was clear that preparations for war were underway, Kudrin had believed the plans would not be carried out, one person familiar with his thinking said. “He counted on things not reaching such a head,” the person said.

Kudrin — who now heads the Audit Chamber, Russia’s financial watchdog — has told allies it would be a betrayal by him to leave for good. He’d appeared in Tel Aviv the weekend of April 9 but took to social media to telegraph to all that he intended to return to Moscow to speak at Russia’s upper chamber the following week. He gave his address according to plan, warning that Western sanctions were confronting Russia with the worst economic downturn in 30 years.

Another former senior state official said he felt a responsibility to remain in Moscow, even though he was taken aback and horrified by the war. “If everyone leaves, then who is going to be here to pick up the pieces,” he said. “It’s like working at a nuclear power station. Who is going to run it if you leave? If you leave, then there is a chance it can explode.”

### **Yeltsin’s tycoons and Putin’s tycoons**

Among the billionaires who left Russia in the immediate aftermath of the invasion are several who grew wealthy during the Yeltsin era, including Alexander Mamut and Alexander Nesis, who own the Russian gold company Polymetal, and Mikhail Fridman and Petr Aven of Alfa Group.

But many other tycoons high-tailed it to Moscow as soon as they were hit with sanctions, which have barred them from travel in the West. Other business executives fear that if they leave Russia, their companies will be seized by the government, one of the Moscow business executives said.

Some of the billionaires now stuck in Moscow are seeking only to emerge unscathed. “You may not support the war but you have to keep quiet and be with your countrymen because some of your soldiers are dying,” said one person close to one of the billionaires present at the Feb. 24 Kremlin meeting. “If you are living in the country, you may not be happy — nobody is happy about what’s going on — but don’t voice your opinion.”

Those billionaires who have been willing to speak out publicly are those who remember a different era; they made their first fortunes in the Yeltsin years, before Putin became president.

Sergei Pugachev, a Kremlin insider until he left Russia in 2011, pointed out that these tycoons were still careful in their public comments not to directly criticize Putin for going to war. “What they say is subtle: The context is that the West, NATO is to blame. ... They are talking about this as though it is a conspiracy against Russia,” he said.

By contrast, those closest to Putin — who are from St. Petersburg and became fabulously wealthy after his rise to the presidency — such as Gennady Timchenko, Yury Kovalchuk and Arkady Rotenberg, are resolutely silent. They “would never go against Putin. They started with Putin, and he made them gazillionaires. Why would you bite the hand that feeds you?” said a former senior Western banker who worked with Russian oligarchs.

Apart from these tycoons, there is an army of officials and business executives in Moscow who are not troubled by Russia’s increasing economic isolation as a result of the invasion, Pugachev said, and many of the contacts he retains in Moscow have not faulted Putin for going to war. They have complained instead that the army should have been better prepared.

He said many members of the current elite are mid-level government ministers who have stashed millions of dollars in private accounts and maintain homes elsewhere in Europe. If sanctions prevent them from traveling to these countries, they'll still be fine. "He's still a minister in Russia, and instead of going to Austria, he'll go to [the Russian resort] Sochi. They don't suffer very much," Pugachev said.

On the surface, moreover, the Russian economy has appeared to stabilize since the initial salvo of sanctions, buoyed by estimated revenue of more than \$800 million a day from the sale of oil and gas to Europe. The central bank's policy to force exporters to sell 80 percent of their hard-currency earnings has prevented a ruble implosion, while Putin has declared that the "economic blitzkrieg" against Russia has failed.

But earlier this month, Nabiullina warned the impact of sanctions was yet to be fully felt and said the worst was still to come. The manufacturing plants, where "practically every product" depended on imported components, were beginning to run out of supplies, while reserves of imported consumer goods were dwindling, too. "We are entering a difficult period of structural changes," she told parliamentary deputies. "The period during which the economy can live on reserves is finite."

In these conditions, Putin's position is precarious, Pugachev said. The population has so far been lulled by the state propaganda machine, which has covered up the level of deaths in the Russian military, as well as by the sanctions' lack of immediate bite. "But in three months, the shops and factories will run out of stocks, and the scale of deaths in the Russian military will become clear," he said.

Despite the near-fatal blow to their interests, for now, the Russian business elite appears to be still frozen in fear. "I don't know who has the balls to fight back," said one of the business executives.

"But if the war is long, and they begin to lose, then the chances will be greater," he said. "There will be a serious battle for Donbas and, if it is not successful, then there will be a big battle inside Russia" among elites.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Covid deaths vaccinated elderly rising</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/04/29/covid-deaths-unvaccinated-boosters/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/04/29/covid-deaths-unvaccinated-boosters/</a>
GIST	<p>Unvaccinated people accounted for the overwhelming majority of deaths in the United States throughout much of the coronavirus pandemic. But that has changed in recent months, according to a Washington Post analysis of state and federal data.</p> <p>The pandemic's toll is no longer falling almost exclusively on those who chose not to or could not get shots, with vaccine protection waning over time and the elderly and immunocompromised — who are at greatest risk of succumbing to covid-19, even if vaccinated — having a harder time dodging increasingly contagious strains.</p> <p>The vaccinated made up 42 percent of fatalities in January and February during the highly contagious omicron variant's surge, compared with 23 percent of the dead in September, the peak of the delta wave, according to nationwide data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed by The Post. The data is based on the date of infection and limited to a sampling of cases in which vaccination status was known.</p> <p>As a group, the unvaccinated remain far more vulnerable to the worst consequences of infection — and are far more likely to die — than people who are vaccinated, and they are especially more at risk than people who have received a booster shot.</p> <p>"It's still absolutely more dangerous to be unvaccinated than vaccinated," said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California at Irvine who studies covid-19 mortality. "A pandemic of</p>

— and by — the unvaccinated is not correct. People still need to take care in terms of prevention and action if they became symptomatic.”

A key explanation for the rise in deaths among the vaccinated is that covid-19 fatalities are again concentrated among the elderly.

Nearly two-thirds of the people who died during the omicron surge were 75 and older, according to a Post analysis, compared with a third during the delta wave. Seniors are overwhelmingly immunized, but vaccines are less effective and their potency wanes over time in older age groups.

Experts say they are not surprised that vaccinated seniors are making up a greater share of the dead, even as vaccine holdouts died far more often than the vaccinated during the omicron surge, according to the CDC. As more people are infected with the virus, the more people it will kill, including a greater number who are vaccinated but among the most vulnerable.

The bulk of vaccinated deaths are among people who did not get a booster shot, according to state data provided to The Post. In two of the states, California and Mississippi, three-quarters of the vaccinated senior citizens who died in January and February did not have booster doses. Regulators in recent weeks have [authorized second booster doses](#) for people over the age of 50, but administration of first booster doses [has stagnated](#).

Even though the death rates for the vaccinated elderly and immunocompromised are low, their losses numbered in the thousands when cases exploded, leaving behind blindsided families. But experts say the rising number of vaccinated people dying should not cause panic in those who got shots, the vast majority of whom will survive infections. Instead, they say, these deaths serve as a reminder that vaccines are not foolproof and that those in high-risk groups should consider getting boosted and taking extra precautions during surges.

“Vaccines are one of the most important and longest-lasting tools we have to protect ourselves,” said California State Epidemiologist Erica Pan, citing state estimates showing vaccines have shown to be 85 percent effective in preventing death.

“Unfortunately, that does leave another 15,” she said.

#### **‘He did not expect to be sick’**

Arianne Bennett recalled her husband, Scott Bennett, saying, “But I’m vaxxed. But I’m vaxxed,” from the D.C. hospital bed where he struggled to fight off covid-19 this winter.

Friends had a hard time believing Bennett, co-founder of the D.C.-based chain Amsterdam Falafelshop, [was 70](#). The adventurous longtime entrepreneur hoped to buy a bar and planned to resume scuba-diving trips and 40-mile bike rides to George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate.

Bennett went to get his booster in early December after returning to D.C. from a lodge he owned in the Poconos, where he and his wife hunkered down for fall. Just a few days after his shot, Bennett began experiencing covid-19 symptoms, meaning he was probably exposed before the extra dose of immunity could kick in. His wife suspects he was infected at a dinner where he and his server were unmasked at times.

A fever-stricken Bennett limped into the hospital alongside his wife, who was also infected, a week before Christmas. He died Jan. 13, among the 125,000 Americans who succumbed to covid-19 in January and February.

“He was absolutely shocked. He did not expect to be sick. He really thought he was safe,” Arianne Bennett recalled. “And I’m like, ‘But baby, you’ve got to wear the mask all the time. All the time. Up over your nose.’”

Jason Salemi, an epidemiologist at the University of South Florida College of Public Health, said the deaths of vaccinated people are among the consequences of a [pandemic response](#) that emphasizes [individuals protecting themselves](#).

“When we are not taking this collective effort to curb community spread of the virus, the virus has proven time and time again it’s really good at finding that subset of vulnerable people,” Salemi said.

While experts say even the medically vulnerable should feel assured that a vaccine will probably save their lives, they should remain vigilant for signs of infection. As more [therapeutics](#) become available, early detection and [treatment](#) is key.

When Wayne Perkey, 84, first started sneezing and feeling other cold symptoms in early February, he resisted his physician daughter’s plea to get tested for the coronavirus.

The legendary former morning radio host in Louisville had been boosted in October. He diligently wore a mask and kept his social engagements to a minimum. It must have been the [common cold](#) or allergies, he believed. Even the physician who ordered a chest X-ray and had no coronavirus tests on hand thought so.

Perkey relented, and the test came back positive. He didn’t think he needed to go to the hospital, even as his oxygen levels declined.

“In his last voice conversation with me, he said, ‘I thought I was doing everything right,’” recalled Lady Booth Olson, another daughter, who lives in Virginia. “I believe society is getting complacent, and clearly somebody he was around was carrying the virus. ... We’ll never know.”

From his hospital bed, Perkey resumed a familiar role as a high-profile proponent for vaccines and coronavirus precautions. He was familiar to many Kentuckians who grew up hearing his voice on the radio and watched him host the televised annual [Crusade for Children fundraiser](#). He spent much of the pandemic as a caregiver to his ex-wife who struggled with chronic fatigue and other long-haul covid symptoms.

“It’s the 7th day of my Covid battle, the worst day so far, and my anger boils when I hear deniers talk about banning masks or social distancing,” Perkey wrote on Facebook on Feb. 16, almost exactly one year after he posted about getting his first shot. “I remember times we cared about our neighbors.”

In messages to a family group chat, he struck an optimistic note. “Thanks for all the love and positive energy,” he texted on Feb. 23. “Wear your mask.”

As is often the case for covid-19 patients, his condition rapidly turned for the worse. His daughter Rebecca Booth, the physician, suspects a previous bout with leukemia made it harder for his immune system to fight off the virus. [He died March 6.](#)

“Really and truly his final days were about, ‘This virus is bad news.’ He basically was saying: ‘Get vaccinated. Be careful. But there is no guarantee,’” Rebecca Booth said. “And, ‘If you think this isn’t a really bad virus, look at me.’ And it is.”

Hospitals, particularly in highly vaccinated areas, have also seen a shift from covid wards filled predominantly with the unvaccinated. Many who end up in the hospital have other conditions that weakens the shield afforded by the vaccine.

Vaccinated people made up slightly less than half the patients in the intensive care units of Kaiser Permanente’s Northern California hospital system in December and January, according to a spokesman.

Gregory Marelich, chair of critical care for the 21 hospitals in that system, said most of the vaccinated and boosted people he saw [in ICUs](#) were immunosuppressed, usually after [organ transplants](#) or because of medications for diseases such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.



“I’ve cared for patients who are vaccinated and immunosuppressed and are in disbelief when they come down with covid,” Marelich said.

### **‘There’s life potential in those people’**

Jessica Estep, 41, rang a bell celebrating her last treatment for follicular lymphoma in September. The single mother of two teenagers had settled into a new home in Michigan, near the Indiana border. After her first marriage ended, she found love again and got married in a zoo in November.

As an asthmatic cancer survivor, Estep knew she faced a [heightened risk](#) from covid-19, relatives said. She saw only a tight circle of friends and worked in her own office in her electronics repair job. She lived in an area where around 1 in 4 residents are fully vaccinated. She planned to get a booster shot in the winter.

“She was the most nonjudgmental person I know,” said her mother, Vickie Estep. “It was okay with her if people didn’t mask up or get vaccinated. It was okay with her that they exercised their right of choice, but she just wanted them to do that away from her so that she could be safe.”

With Michigan battling back-to-back surges of the delta and omicron variants, Jessica Estep wasn’t able to dodge the virus any longer — she fell ill in mid-December. After surviving a cancer doctors described as incurable, Estep died Jan. 27. Physicians said the coronavirus essentially turned her lungs into concrete, her mother said.

Estep’s 14-year-old daughter now lives with her grandparents. Her widower returned to Indianapolis just months after he moved to Michigan to be with his new wife.

Her family shared her story with a local television station in hopes of inspiring others to get vaccinated, to protect people such as Estep who could not rely on their own vaccination as a foolproof shield. In response to the station’s Facebook post about the story, several commenters shrugged off their pleas and insinuated it was the vaccines rather than covid causing deaths.

Immunocompromised people and those with other underlying conditions are worth protecting, Vickie Estep said. “There’s life potential in those people.”

### **A delayed shot**

As Arianne Bennett navigates life without her husband, she hopes the lesson people heed from his death is to take advantage of all tools available to mitigate a virus that still finds and kills the vulnerable, including by getting boosters.

Bennett wore a music festival shirt her husband gave her as she walked into a grocery store to get her third shot in March. Her husband urged her to get one when they returned to D.C., but she became sick at the same time he did. She scheduled the appointment for the earliest she could get the shot: 90 days after receiving monoclonal antibodies to treat the disease.

“My booster! Yay!” Bennett exclaimed in her chair as the pharmacist presented an updated vaccine card. “It’s been challenging, but we got through it,” the pharmacist said, unaware of Scott Bennett’s death.

Tears welled in Bennett’s eyes as the needle went in her left arm, just over a year after she and her husband received their first shots.

“Last time we got it, we took selfies: ‘Look, we had vaccines,’” Bennett said, beginning to sob. “This one leaves me crying, missing him so much.”

The pharmacist leaned over and gave Bennett a hug in her chair.

“He would want you to do this,” the pharmacist said. “You have to know.”

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Western artillery surges into Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/04/30/ukraine-russia-artillery/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/04/30/ukraine-russia-artillery/</a>
GIST	<p>The Western artillery flooding into Ukraine will alter the war with Russia, setting off a bloody battle of wits backed by long-range weapons and forcing both sides to grow more nimble if they hope to avoid significant fatalities as fighting intensifies in the east, U.S. officials and military analysts predict.</p> <p>The expanded artillery battle follows Russia's failed effort to rapidly seize Ukraine's major population centers, including the capital, Kyiv. It comes as the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Western benefactors brace for what is expected to be a grinding campaign in the Donbas region. The conflict there is expected to showcase the long-range cannons that are a centerpiece of Russia's arsenal, weaponry already used to devastating effect in places such as Mariupol, a southern port city that has been pulverized by unrelenting bombardment.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, speaking alongside his Canadian counterpart at the Pentagon on Thursday, said long-range artillery will prove "decisive" in the next phase of the war. The Biden administration, which along with Canada is training small numbers of Ukrainian troops how to operate the dozens of 155 mm howitzers that both countries have pledged to provide, is expected to approve the transfer of even more artillery to Ukraine in the coming days, Austin said.</p> <p>The U.S. and Canadian howitzers bound for Ukraine are towed on trailers, while those pledged by France — systems known as self-propelled Caesar howitzers — fire the same 155 mm explosive rounds, but from the back of a truck chassis.</p> <p>The United States alone already has promised Zelensky nearly 190,000 artillery rounds, plus 90 howitzers to fire them. As of Thursday, more than half had arrived in Ukraine, said a senior U.S. defense official who, like some others, spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the administration.</p> <p>A new \$33 billion request to Congress for additional Ukraine aid includes proposed funding for "longer-range artillery of a heavier caliber," Secretary of State Antony Blinken told lawmakers on Capitol Hill, though he stopped short of identifying which specific systems are under consideration. Other allies, such as Britain and Sweden, also could send artillery, analysts said.</p> <p>To date, Russia and Ukraine have traded fire using some of the same systems, including the powerful 300 mm Smerch multiple-launch rocket system, which can shoot rounds some 55 miles, and aging 122 mm howitzers first fielded in the 1960s. The introduction of various Western artillery pieces is expected to accelerate a tactical shift by both sides to employ what is known as counter-battery fire, in which military forces seek out their enemy's artillery, determine its location and attack, analysts said.</p> <p>"You're trying to find, fix and finish," said George Flynn, a retired three-star Marine general and former artillery officer. "You want to find the enemy howitzers. You want to fix their position. And then you want to finish them off. That's the essence of targeting."</p> <p>After an artillery unit attacks an adversary, it needs to keep moving, Flynn said. "Once you get into a counter-battery fight, it's shoot and scoot," he added. "You don't stick around and let yourself get targeted."</p> <p>Ukraine's ability to target Russian artillery units is especially important, analysts say, because of the Kremlin's demonstrated willingness to lob round after round into cities and towns, destroying civilian homes and infrastructure. "Just the existence" of more Ukrainian artillery units performing counter-battery fire will degrade Russia's ability to "sit there, pile up ammo and go to town," said Scott Boston, a former U.S. Army field artillery officer who studies the Russian military for the Rand Corp.</p> <p>"The problem" that Ukraine and its Western allies would "like to impose on the Russians," he said, "is for them to never have confidence that a headquarters, or a key ammunition dump, or an important cluster of firing platforms, can ever be stationary for very long."</p>

The Pentagon on Friday assessed that Russia has not been as effective as it would like at using long-range artillery. A senior defense official noted that, as the West continues to send so much artillery to Ukraine, “this could become a bit of a gun battle.”

Artillery units often disguise themselves with camouflage or other forms of cover, and it can require a mixture of intelligence, unmanned aircraft and radar to spot them. The West is providing Ukraine with drones and counter-battery radar to do just that.

Zelensky also has requested some form of multiple-launch rocket artillery, such as the highly accurate M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, known as HIMARS, that is used by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Such weapons launch rounds quickly, which is useful in firing on enemy artillery forces before they reposition, said Mark Cancian, a retired Marine Corps colonel who studies the war for the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Cancian, a former artillery officer, said that there “will be a lot of pressure to provide” HIMARS in the coming days and that he would not be surprised to see the United States begin supplying it soon. Another type of multiple-launch rocket system, such as the M270 operated by the U.S. Army, also could be sent, he surmised. The HIMARS is newer and moves about the battlefield more freely, while the M270 carries more rockets.

“I think there will be a lot of pressure to provide that, and since we seem to be announcing an aid package a week, I wouldn’t be surprised to see HIMARS next week or the week after,” Cancian said.

Ukrainian officials also have sought more self-propelled howitzers rather than towed weapons such as the M777. A Ukrainian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the issue is sensitive, said that while it appears easier to perform maintenance on and find parts for the M777 howitzer, it is more vulnerable to Russian counter-battery fire than self-propelled howitzers, like the Army’s M109 Paladin.

Cancian said he would be watching to see whether advanced, highly accurate 155 mm Excalibur rounds make it to Ukraine. The weapons are guided by GPS and designed to fly up to 25 miles, according to Raytheon, the Excalibur’s manufacturer. The Pentagon has declined to specify what types of artillery rounds are being sent.

The shipping of Western artillery into Ukraine is important partly because there are few places where Ukraine can find replacement rounds for its Soviet-era systems, said Sam Cranny-Evans, an analyst at the Royal United Services Institute in London. Poland, Bulgaria and a few other NATO allies produce them, but many more countries produce ammunition for Western weapons.

While the West has promised tens of thousands of artillery rounds to Ukraine, they may be depleted quickly, Cranny-Evans said, requiring defense contractors to ramp up production. Russia also has a significant advantage in the number of artillery pieces it possesses, and it’s unclear how many of Ukraine’s legacy systems are still operational or how much ammunition is available for them, he added.

Russian forces are using artillery to extricate themselves from Ukrainian ambushes and inflict fatalities as well as to avoid having to go “into the teeth of these very high-end Western weapons,” including Javelin and NLAW anti-armor missiles, that already have destroyed some Russian units, Cranny-Evans said.

“They’re just going to sit back and let their long-range assets do the work because they don’t have the manpower to waste,” he said.

Canadian Defense Minister Anita Anand said in an interview that there is a role for collaboration among Western countries in providing weapons to Ukraine that are “consistent and interchangeable,” allowing Ukraine to learn the systems and maintain them when they are damaged.

	<p>“The M777s are a perfect example of the way in which allied countries with that capability can band together and respond to a desperate need that Ukraine has,” she said. “And that’s a model that we’ll continue to utilize going forward.”</p> <p>The use of artillery and other weapons has been complementary in Ukraine and will continue to be, Boston said.</p> <p>“If you do a good job of bottling someone up, then they’re going to be way more vulnerable to artillery than if they were dispersed and in cover,” he said. “If the Russians don’t have confidence that they can disperse because they’re going to get picked off by Javelin teams, then they might be bunching for security against that — and then be more vulnerable against artillery.”</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukraine: Russia deploys new troops</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/kremlin-deploys-new-troops-to-ukraine-as-both-sides-gird-for-a-war-of-attrition.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/kremlin-deploys-new-troops-to-ukraine-as-both-sides-gird-for-a-war-of-attrition.html</a>
GIST	<p>Russia is calling in troops based in its far east to join the battle in Ukraine, the Ukrainian military high command said on Saturday, as Moscow seeks to reinforce its war-fighting force amid heavy losses and signs that its drive to seize eastern Ukraine has stalled.</p> <p>Adding to the sense that both sides appeared to be girding for a war of attrition, Ukrainians on Saturday lined up at gas stations across the country as the government struggled to deal with a fuel shortage caused by Russian attacks on oil infrastructure.</p> <p>“Queues and rising prices at gas stations are seen in many regions of our country,” President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said Friday in his nightly address. “The occupiers are deliberately destroying the infrastructure for the production, supply and storage of fuel.”</p> <p>He said a Russian blockade of Ukrainian seaports meant that replacement stocks could not come in by tanker. The war has also paralyzed grain harvests in Ukraine, known as Europe’s breadbasket, disrupting global food supplies and <a href="#">worsening a food crisis in East Africa</a>.</p> <p>As Western allies have poured more heavy weapons into Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland, both NATO countries, reached an agreement that could presage the transfer of MIG-29 warplanes to Ukraine. Slovakia said that Polish F-16 jets would patrol its skies, freeing up a Slovak fleet of the Soviet-made MIGs.</p> <p>After a meeting between the two countries’ defense ministers on Friday, Poland said its air force would begin patrols over Slovakia as part of their joint efforts to help Ukraine.</p> <p>Slovakia did not say explicitly that it would send its MIGs to Ukraine, but it has raised the possibility of doing so — provided that it can find an alternative way to protect its airspace, which the agreement with Poland would seem to achieve.</p> <p>Poland last month declined to provide its own fleet of MIG-29s to Ukraine directly, instead offering to fly the planes to a United States military base in Germany, where they could then be flown to Ukraine. Washington, worried about provoking Russia, declined the offer.</p> <p>Russia’s foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, contended that the United States and the European Union, by supplying more powerful weapons to Ukraine, were waging a proxy battle against Russia, regardless of the cost in civilian lives.</p> <p>The flow of weapons from the West, Mr. Lavrov said, had nothing to do with supporting Ukraine’s sovereignty, but rather would enable the United States and the European Union to battle Russia “to the last Ukrainian.”</p>

The fuel shortages in Ukraine followed Russian attacks this week on Ukraine's main producer of fuel products and other large refineries. Russia said it had also hit storage facilities for petroleum products used by the Ukrainian military.

A senior Pentagon official said these types of attacks were intended to undercut the Ukrainian military's ability to "replenish their own stores and to reinforce themselves."

In response, officials in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, urged residents to use public transportation rather than private vehicles to save fuel. "We need to keep in mind the needs of the military and our defenders," the city's administration said.

The Kremlin's deployment of troops from eastern Russia to the battle front in Ukraine suggested that Moscow could be trying to regain momentum in what the Pentagon has described as a "plodding" offensive in eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian military said that the additional Russian forces were being sent first to a Russian city near the Ukrainian border and then to the northeastern Ukrainian city of Izium, where the Russians have met fierce resistance. It did not say how many troops were being deployed.

Western analysts have said Russia's offensive in the east has slowed as it struggles to overcome many of the same logistical problems involving shipments of food, fuel, weapons and ammunition that hampered the initial phase of its invasion more than two months ago.

On Saturday, the British Defense Ministry said Russia was trying to fix issues that had constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control.

But Russia "still faces considerable challenges," the ministry said in its latest intelligence update on the war. "It has been forced to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in northeast Ukraine. Many of these units are likely suffering from weakened morale."

The fighting in eastern Ukraine has exacted an increasingly heavy toll on both militaries. The Russian Defense Ministry said on Saturday that its forces had fired on 389 targets across Ukraine, including facilities housing soldiers, killing 120 Ukrainians.

Ukraine said its Special Forces struck a command center near Izium, destroying dozens of tanks and armored vehicles.

In a measure of the rising toll on civilians, the Ukrainian authorities said the police had received more than 7,000 reports of missing people since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24, with half of the cases still unsolved.

Ukrainian officials called the number "unprecedented in modern history," and they appealed to allies to send forensic experts and specialists in managing missing-persons registries.

In a long-awaited but frequently frustrated development in Mariupol, the ruined southern Ukrainian port occupied by Russian forces, about 20 women and children were evacuated from the Azovstal steel plant where the city's last Ukrainian fighters have been holed up along with hundreds of increasingly desperate civilians.

The news, from Capt. Svyatoslav Palamar, the deputy commander of the Azov regiment, came amid United Nations-backed efforts to broker a cease-fire to allow the trapped civilians and Ukrainian fighters to escape the plant.

Captain Palamar said in a video posted to Telegram that an evacuation column had arrived in the evening to bring the civilians to a safe place, adding that he hoped wounded soldiers would be given safe passage as well.

He did not provide further details, though Russia's TASS news agency said one of its correspondents on the scene reported that 25 people — including six children — had walked out of the plant. It was not immediately clear whether they were free to seek safety in Ukraine or were being held by Russian forces.

Nearly a million Ukrainians have been moved from Ukraine to Russia, Mr. Lavrov said in an interview published by Chinese state news media on Saturday. He described the moves as voluntary "evacuations," a claim that contradicted witnesses, Ukrainian officials and Western observers who have said that many Ukrainians have been forcibly deported.

Mr. Lavrov's claim echoed the false assertions in Russian propaganda that its forces are liberating ethnic Russians and others in Ukraine from what President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia calls the "openly neo-Nazi" Ukrainian government.

Ukraine has argued that Russia is carrying out the forcible migration of its citizens, which is a war crime, to be used as leverage in any peace talks.

Ukraine has also accused Russian forces of stealing cultural artifacts from occupied cities.

In Mariupol, city officials said Russian forces had taken more than 2,000 items — including icons, medals and works by Russian painters — from the city's museums to Donetsk, the capital of an eastern region controlled by Moscow-backed separatists.

In the southern Ukrainian city of Melitopol, local officials said that a mysterious man in a white lab coat had used long tweezers and gloves to extract scores of gold artifacts more than 2,300 years old from cardboard boxes in a local museum, as a squad of Russian soldiers stood behind him with guns, watching eagerly. The items were from the Scythian empire and dated back to the fourth century B.C.

"The orcs have taken hold of our Scythian gold," declared Melitopol's mayor, Ivan Fyodorov, using a derogatory term many Ukrainians reserve for Russian soldiers. "This is one of the largest and most expensive collections in Ukraine, and today we don't know where they took it."

A series of explosions inside Russia in recent weeks have also increased concerns about the war spilling beyond Ukraine's borders and set off the first air-raid siren on Russian soil since World War II.

The incidents include a Russian fuel depot that burst into flames moments after surveillance video captured bright streaks of rockets fired from low-flying helicopters, and a fire that broke out at a military research institute near Moscow.

Russia has accused Ukraine of carrying out the helicopter strike, while military analysts have suggested that Ukrainian sabotage was probably responsible for other fires. Ukraine has responded with deliberate ambiguity.

"We don't confirm, and we don't deny," Oleksei Arestovych, an adviser to Mr. Zelensky's chief of staff, said in an interview.

Mr. Arestovych described the policy as a strategic stance, and he compared it with Israel's longstanding policy of ambiguity on nuclear arms, another issue of extraordinary geopolitical sensitivity.

"After what has been happening," he said, "officially we don't say yes and we don't say no, just like Israel."



HEADLINE	05/01 Foreign fighters' deaths in Ukraine forces
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/foreign-legion-volunteers.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/europe/foreign-legion-volunteers.html</a>
GIST	<p>The deaths of three foreigners killed this week while fighting with Ukrainian forces has drawn renewed attention to thousands of largely unregulated volunteers who have gone to fight Russia's invasion, some of them accepted into an international legion.</p> <p>Among the dead was Willy Joseph Cancel Jr., 22, a correctional officer and a Marine Corps veteran who left Kentucky to fight with the Ukrainian army, <a href="#">his uncle said</a>.</p> <p>Mr. Cancel's father was told that the former Marine had been killed when his Ukrainian unit was overrun by Russian troops this week, the uncle, Christopher Cancel, said. His body had not yet been recovered.</p> <p>A Ukrainian Defense Ministry official confirmed on Friday that an American, a Briton and a Dane had been killed fighting with the Ukrainian Army's International Legion. The official asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the deaths.</p> <p>"The armed forces pay tribute to the sacrifice of the foreign heroes who have come to protect the Ukrainian people from this barbarous invasion but also to defend freedom and democracy everywhere," the legion said in a statement.</p> <p>Malcolm Nance, a Navy intelligence veteran and former TV commentator who is now the public face of the legion, called the volunteers who died "protecting angels, along with all those people who lost their lives in this senseless Russian invasion."</p> <p>In an interview before the foreign fighters were killed, Mr. Nance said many would-be volunteers arriving in the country underestimated the danger from Russian forces. He said the war was unlike what American veterans may have experienced in the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.</p> <p>"You're the hunted now," he said. "And it is a full combined arms army with an enormous artillery machine that is there to chew you up."</p> <p>Ukraine and Russia have <a href="#">each had steep military losses</a>, though their governments have not given specific figures. In mid-April, U.S. intelligence agencies estimated that 5,500 to 11,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed, and more than 18,000 wounded. Western intelligence agencies estimate that Russian military losses range from 7,000 to 10,000 killed and 20,000 to 30,000 wounded.</p> <p><a href="#">The United Nations says at least 2,300 civilians have also been killed</a>, acknowledging the actual number is likely much higher.</p> <p>After signing up a rush of volunteers at the start of the war, the International Legion recently has become much more selective in recruiting members, taking only those with combat experience who pass rigorous vetting, according to the legion's spokesman, Damien Magrou, a Norwegian lawyer.</p> <p>Mr. Magrou said the legion rejects a majority of applicants, but some of those who are turned down make their way to the front lines anyway, hoping to find another group to fight with.</p> <p>"We tell them there is a shuttle bus back to Poland, the best thing you can do is get a seat on it," he said.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine announced the formation of the legion on Feb. 27, three days after the invasion began, and invited foreign volunteers to come and fight. Ten days later the Ukrainian government said it had received 20,000 applications.</p> <p>The government has declined to say how many foreign volunteers there are in the country, but there are believed to be several thousand, most of them fighting with groups other than the International Legion.</p>

	<p>It was not clear when Mr. Cancel joined the legion. According to the Marine Corps, he left the U.S. military last November after receiving a bad conduct discharge and serving time in a military jail for an undisclosed criminal offense.</p> <p>Fighters accepted by the International League sign a contract to fight with the Ukrainian army and are paid the same rate as Ukrainian soldiers.</p> <p>In Lviv, in western Ukraine, train and bus stations have become hubs not only for Ukrainians, but also for Americans and other foreigners arriving to join the fight or help with aid efforts.</p> <p>Dominick Henry, a businessman from New York City who was recently in Ukraine helping with logistics for volunteers, said he tried to channel most of the new arrivals into humanitarian operations.</p> <p>“Usually when Americans go fight they’ve got air support, they’ve got everything,” he said. “This time it’s the opposite.”</p> <p>He said many of those who came to Ukraine to fight the Russians were disappointed when they were rejected by combat forces.</p> <p>“They come for glory and honor,” said Mr. Henry. “They think it will give them a leg up in life. It’s a heavy price to pay.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 China president behind zero-Covid fortress</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/asia/china-covid-zero-xi-jinping.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/asia/china-covid-zero-xi-jinping.html</a>
GIST	<p>China’s leader, Xi Jinping, <a href="#">waved at crowds</a> of giddily cheering students. He held meetings with <a href="#">Olympic Games officials</a>, economic policymakers and <a href="#">European leaders</a>. He <a href="#">toured a tropical island</a>.</p> <p>But there was a revealing gap in Mr. Xi’s <a href="#">busy itinerary</a> last month, exposing the predicament that Covid is creating in a politically crucial year when he hopes to extend his hold on power. He stayed behind the scenes when it came to China’s biggest, most contentious lockdown since the pandemic began.</p> <p>Throughout April, Mr. Xi gave no public speeches focused on outbreaks in China as its biggest city, Shanghai, shut down <a href="#">to try to stifle infections</a>, and then <a href="#">Beijing went on alert</a> after a burst of cases. Nor did Mr. Xi directly address the 25 million residents of Shanghai who have been ordered to stay at home for weeks, despite their complaints of scarce food, overwhelmed hospitals and confusing zigzags in mass quarantine rules.</p> <p>“He wants to deliberately keep a certain distance in from Shanghai,” said Deng Yuwen, a former editor of a Communist Party newspaper who now lives in the United States. “No doubt, he’s doing a lot about fighting the pandemic behind the scenes, but of course he does not want to be directly drawn into the mess in Shanghai.”</p> <p>Mr. Xi’s orders have instead been passed through subordinates or meeting summaries. They have cited his demand to stick to a “dynamic zero Covid” goal: essentially ensuring no cases in a population of 1.4 billion by strict mass testing and isolation of infections or close contacts. On Friday, the Communist Party Politburo — a council of 25 leaders, including Mr. Xi — renewed its commitment to that goal, <a href="#">noting the rising economic risks</a> from Covid and the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The outbreaks in Shanghai, Beijing and other cities are testing Mr. Xi’s acumen and authority before an important Communist Party congress late this year. While he is nearly certain to win a <a href="#">groundbreaking third term</a> as party general secretary, Mr. Xi also wants to ensure the leadership is dominated by officials who will defend him and enforce his agenda.</p>

To secure that outcome, Mr. Xi wants to demonstrate serene political mastery, and until lately, the zero-Covid strategy has been a signature achievement: an effective, if expensive, and generally popular vow that China would avoid mass sickness and deaths.

After Communist Party officials initially downplayed the virus in early 2020, Mr. Xi built China into an epidemiological fortress, stifling infections and protecting the economy while the United States suffered nearly one million Covid deaths.

Now there is no easy way out of that fortress. Mr. Xi's leadership has been so invested in showing that China could handle its own pandemic needs that the government held off from introducing mRNA vaccines developed abroad, which are generally more effective than China's homegrown vaccines. China's vaccination of the aged has also lagged.

Without the necessary defenses, the country could face surging cases that, even with Omicron's lower virulence, officials warn could overwhelm hospitals. But China's goal of eliminating virtually all cases risks turning into a costly, contentious task with no end in sight, if outbreaks of Omicron keep prompting measures that freeze up whole cities.

"This policy was a demonstration that the government puts the health and the welfare of the Chinese people first," said [Patricia Thornton](#), a professor at the University of Oxford who studies Chinese politics and society. "That's becoming a much more difficult story for Xi Jinping to tell."

The closings and demands for constant checks and vigilance, especially in Shanghai, have ignited public frustration, exhausted local officials and medical workers, and sapped economic momentum.

While residents under China's past lockdowns have complained about draconian restrictions, this time there are more critics and bolder ones, including economists and business executives, arguing that zero Covid has become untenable in the face of the new variant.

"Covid is not the only illness threatening the lives of the public," Liang Jianzhang, the co-founder of Trip.com Group, a big Chinese travel corporation, wrote in a recent article in the [Chinese Enterprise News](#). "Sacrificing everything in the pursuit of extreme 'shock' measures is not the comprehensive victory that we truly need."

The unexpected turbulence of 2022, including China's tortuous positioning [over Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#), is still extremely unlikely to deny Mr. Xi a third term. He is China's most powerful leader in decades, and the ire in Shanghai shows no signs of escalating into any challenge to his rule. In other cities and towns there continues to be acceptance, if not enthusiasm, for strict controls.

"We were doing nucleic acid tests every day to begin with, so I don't feel life has changed with the outbreak in Beijing in recent days," said Zhou Yunhong, a pork butcher in a Beijing fresh food market, who said the daily tests had been taking place since January.

"I'm not worried about the Beijing outbreak," said Li Kun, an egg vendor in the same market. "This is the capital. How could they leave ordinary folks here hungry?"

But extended economic damage and social tensions from long shutdowns could soften Mr. Xi's power to corral elite support behind his picks for the next leadership lineup, said [Minxin Pei](#), a professor at Claremont McKenna College in California who studies Chinese politics. Mr. Xi is likely to stay dominant no matter what, but dominance can rise or fall by increments, and the officials around him matter.

"The difference right now with respect to the zero-Covid approach is that the costs are now visible," Professor Pei said. "You cannot gloss over them."

Even before the Shanghai crisis, Mr. Xi sounded embattled. Officials have lately suggested that criticizing the Covid policy [amounts to disloyalty](#) to Mr. Xi, or [called stamping out cases](#) “a political duty that takes precedence over everything.”

“Countless facts tell us that we can win respect and initiative only if we show the spirit of brave fighters defeating our foes face to face on a narrow path, daring to struggle, mastering struggle,” Mr. Xi told the [officials at the Party School in early March](#).

Last week, Mr. Xi promised to prop up China’s growth with an influx of infrastructure spending, and on Friday the Politburo said the government would stabilize the economy while extinguishing Covid cases. “Persist with dynamic zero, protecting people’s lives and health to the maximum extent, while reducing the impact of the pandemic on economic and social development to a minimum,” read the [Xinhua news agency](#)’s summary of the Politburo meeting.

But an increasingly vocal group of Chinese economists and business leaders argue that damage from shutdowns will be harder to cure. The chronic uncertainty over when it is possible to travel, spend, buy property or invest in business has damaged consumer and company confidence.

The solution, they argue, is to accelerate the rollout of more vaccines and treatments, and to make sure that older people and other vulnerable groups are vaccinated — allowing more flexibility when infections break out.

“The dynamic zero policy that we’re enforcing is increasingly costly, and increasingly ineffective,” Lu Ting, the chief China economist at Nomura Holdings, [said in a speech last month](#) that was widely shared on Chinese social media.

“After more and more people understand that the economic costs are too high and unsustainable, change will come more easily,” Mr. Lu said in a telephone interview.

Easing from zero Covid may be politically harder than some critics assume.

Mr. Xi has made China’s relatively few deaths from Covid — [nearly 5,000](#), mostly in the early months of the pandemic — a core of his argument that the Communist Party is more effective at government than any liberal democracy.

But barely more than half of Chinese people 80 and older have had two vaccine shots, and fewer than 20 percent of people in that age group have received a booster, Zeng Yixin, a vice minister of the National Health Commission, [said last month](#).

Depending on the death rate used for calculations, fatalities in China from an unfettered spread of Omicron could be between 100,000 and 840,000, said [Yanzhong Huang](#), a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. Even deaths on a smaller scale could ignite public anger.

“They don’t want to live with the virus, but they have to live with the policies they have,” Mr. Huang said in a telephone interview. “It’s a real dilemma.”

Mr. Xi appears to be wagering that he can beat down the infections in Shanghai and hold China to zero Covid until after the party congress, when some easing may be possible. For now, officials are swaddling Mr. Xi in effusive propaganda.

During a recent visit to Renmin University in Beijing, Chinese state television lingered on the hundreds of cheering students. Before the Guangxi region in southern China [announced that Mr. Xi](#) would be one of its delegates to the party congress, it issued reports that villagers there were being [given small red books](#) of Mr. Xi’s thoughts — an echo of Mao Zedong’s “little red book.”

	“With Xi Jinping at the helm, he will gather together even more of the majestic power of this era,” read the Xinhua state news agency’s report from <a href="#">Guangxi</a> on Mr. Xi’s selection. It did not mention Covid.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Sunflower oil ‘vanishes’ amid Ukraine war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/cooking-oil-shortage-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/cooking-oil-shortage-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>First the coronavirus, then the war. Just as the pandemic caused shortages of essential items, <a href="#">Russia’s invasion of Ukraine</a> has disrupted important food supplies, driving up prices of staples like cooking oil in supermarkets around the world.</p> <p>Before the war, Ukraine was the world’s largest exporter of sunflower oil. The conflict has now paralyzed harvests and left many nations with limited stocks of edible oil and soaring prices for what’s left — <a href="#">worsening a food crisis in East Africa</a> and leading to export restrictions in <a href="#">Indonesia</a>. Some shoppers, most recently in Britain, are being limited in their purchases of cooking oils, as supermarkets and restaurants adjust to the climbing costs.</p> <p>“Supply chains, already disrupted by Covid-19, have been further complicated by the war in Ukraine, which is causing shortages in some ingredients like sunflower oil and raising the price of substitute ingredients,” said Kate Halliwell, the chief scientific officer of the Food and Drink Federation, which represents Britain’s largest manufacturing sector.</p> <p>“Manufacturers are doing all they can to keep costs down, but inevitably some will have to be passed to consumers,” she said.</p> <p>Tom Holder, a British Retail Consortium spokesman, said retailers have imposed limits on customers after the war disrupted supplies.</p> <p>Supermarket chains <a href="#">in Spain</a>, <a href="#">Greece</a>, <a href="#">Turkey</a>, <a href="#">Belgium</a> and other nations have limited cooking oil purchases, sometimes describing the moves as precautions in the face of increased demand, according to local news outlets. At Tesco, a major British chain, customers can buy up to three bottles of edible oil, “so that everyone can get what they need,” as a flyer posted on a shelf says.</p> <p><b>Europe’s breadbasket</b></p> <p>Russia’s invasion has devastated Ukrainian cities, homes, hospitals and schools — as well as the nation’s agriculture, <a href="#">preventing harvests and destroying granaries and crops</a> in a region known as Europe’s breadbasket. Ukraine and Russia together had <a href="#">accounted for about 75 percent of sunflower seed oil</a>, a primary cooking oil in many parts of the world.</p> <p>But planting, output and trade have dwindled, and commodity prices have risen sharply, the World Trade Organization <a href="#">said this month</a>. The United Nations’ food agency has reported <a href="#">sharp increases in the prices of vegetable oils</a>, influenced by the war and persistent drought in places like Brazil and Argentina.</p> <p>Business owners in Britain have hesitated to pass on the costs to customers, racing to find alternative oils as prices rise.</p> <p>Harry Niazi, who owns the Famous Olley’s Fish Experience, a London restaurant, said the cost of a 20-liter jug of sunflower oil has jumped to 42.50 pounds, about \$55, from around 22 pounds, or \$29. “It’s very, very scary, and I don’t know how the fish and chips industry is going to cope. I really don’t,” he <a href="#">told The Associated Press</a>.</p> <p>In Britain, which imported 83 percent of its sunflower oil from Ukraine, shoppers are being asked to show restraint, and flexibility. Like Tesco, the supermarket Morrisons has introduced a cap, limiting shoppers to two bottles. Another, Waitrose, is working with suppliers to increase orders of other oils.</p>

The disruption was so jarring that Britain's food standards agencies said last month that manufacturers were replacing cooking oils with rapeseed oil so "urgently" that some had been unable to change their labels as quickly.

That prompted Emily Miles, the chief executive of the Food Standards Agency, which covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland, to [assure consumers](#) the allergy risk of rapeseed oil was "very low" and that they were working to ensure foods manufactured with sunflower oil, including breaded fish, frozen vegetables and chips, remained on sale.

"Food businesses are reporting that U.K. supplies of sunflower oil are likely to run out in a few weeks with some businesses already experiencing severe difficulties," the agency said in a statement.

Companies have also tried to adjust with what's available, reformulating recipes with palm or soybean oils. Rapeseed oil, mostly intended for the biodiesel market, has been redirected to food use, according to [a report last month by Fediol, a European industry group](#).

Spending on sunflower oil, Britain's most popular choice for frying, and vegetable oil rose 27 percent and 40 percent respectively, compared with the same period in 2021, according to figures supplied by Kantar, a British firm that studies consumer behavior.

Fraser McKevitt, an analyst at Kantar, said customers stocked up, aware of possible shortages and higher prices, before supermarkets started to introduce restrictions this month.

### **Pivoting from sunflower oil**

Ms. Halliwell said a quarter of the sunflower oil on the global market has "vanished" in the wake of the sanctions imposed on Russia, which cut off its industries from many markets. Adding to the uncertainty is how much sunflower seed was planted in Ukraine and how much harvest can make it to markets, she said.

In the United States, the war has put more pressure on domestic soybean producers trying to make up for shortfalls, Robb MacKie, the president of the American Bakers Association, said.

"Two of the three major edible oils export markets used by bakers are in complete turmoil — sunflower oil from Ukraine and palm oil from Indonesia," he said, calling for federal action to shift soybean oil stocks back into food instead of being diverted to biodiesel production.

"The disruption of this ubiquitous ingredient will cause further strain on America's food system," he said. And price increases "will exacerbate the challenging cost environment that U.S. companies have been contending with for the last year," Katie Denis, a spokeswoman for the Consumer Brands Association, said in a report this month.

Other countries are feeling the pinch: Ukraine's primary export markets last year included India, China, the Middle East and North Africa, and the European Union, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rema 1000, a Norwegian supermarket chain, [is considering a return to selling palm oil](#), which it had previously banned for environmental reasons, and its Danish affiliate has limited shoppers to three bottles of oil.

But that approach could be aggravated by an Indonesian ban on its palm oil exports, weather-related global shortages and the tightness in the market from the war, Oil World, an industry analyst group, said [in a report on Wednesday](#).

In Norway, Christopher Harlem, the chief executive of the importer [Harlem Food](#), said some European companies were meeting demand — for now — by dipping into their stored supplies of sunflower oil. "At some point, more oil will not be added to the storages," he said. "I cannot get hold of any sunflower oil at the moment, not at any volume that counts."



	He added, “I think we have to face there is an upcoming shortage ahead, without doubt, and start thinking about adaptation and replacements.”
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukraine official: intentional ambiguity</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/ukraine-russia-attack-denials.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/ukraine-russia-attack-denials.html</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — A fuel depot in Russia burst into flames, moments after surveillance video captured the bright streaks of rockets fired from low-flying helicopters. A fire broke out at a military research institute near Moscow. Additional fuel tanks have exploded.</p> <p>These and other similar attacks in Russia have been some of the most intriguing, and opaque, military developments in the last month of the war. If carried out by Ukraine, they represent acts of once nearly unimaginable audacity; one of them prompted the first air raid siren on Russian soil since World War II.</p> <p>Russia has accused Ukraine of carrying out the helicopter strike and military analysts have suggested that Ukrainian sabotage is very likely responsible for the other fires. Ukraine, for its part, has made no official admissions but instead has winked at the possibility of its involvement, with one official suggesting the fires were just Russia’s bad “karma.”</p> <p>Now, a senior Ukrainian official has described in the clearest terms yet his government’s policy on strikes inside Russia, calling it one of strategic ambiguity.</p> <p>“We don’t confirm, and we don’t deny,” said the official, Oleksei Arestovych, an adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky’s chief of staff.</p> <p>Mr. Arestovych, in an interview, compared the approach to Israel’s longstanding policy of ambiguity on nuclear arms, another issue of extraordinary geopolitical sensitivity.</p> <p>“After what has been happening, officially we don’t say yes and we don’t say no, just like Israel,” he said.</p> <p>Any escalation of attacks on Russia by Ukraine could have far-reaching implications, perhaps influencing public opinion about the war in Russia, or inflaming the Kremlin to the point of escalating its own strikes.</p> <p>If Western weaponry were deployed in striking Russia, it would fuel Russian propaganda that blames the West for the war and enhance the possibility that the conflict could spill past Russia and Ukraine’s borders.</p> <p>The fires at Russian military sites, beginning with the April 1 helicopter assault on the fuel depot in Belgorod, about 15 miles from the Ukrainian border, have injected a new element into the military equation of the war. They raise the possibility that Russia, after weeks of inflicting devastating damage in Ukraine, might start to suffer losses on its own land.</p> <p>The strikes come in two forms: the clear military attack with low-flying helicopters near the border, and sabotage deeper inside Russia.</p> <p>Russian and Ukrainian media reports have attributed a dozen or so blazes to strikes or sabotage. In addition to the helicopter strike there have been at least three other fires at military sites that seem suspicious, and which military analysts have said were very likely set intentionally.</p> <p>And while some fires point clearly to an assault or an act of sabotage — such as the two fires that broke out in quick succession at fuel tanks in Bryansk on April 25 — others have remained inscrutable, with neither Russia nor Ukraine suggesting a relation to the war.</p>

The incidents have stirred debate over whether a wider set of targets in Russia may drive home to the Russian people that the war, seen for now only on television and filtered through state propaganda, has a cost at home.

Alternatively, the fires and explosions might cause Russians to rally around the flag in ways damaging to Ukraine, such as in building support for a general mobilization in Russia. That would enable the Kremlin to dispatch more soldiers to the battlefields, despite heavy losses so far.

Ukrainian officials, for their part, have hinted at their involvement with dark humor.

A deputy interior minister, Anton Gerashchenko, posted on Twitter a “no smoking” sign beside a picture of the fuel depots in Bryansk engulfed in flame.

Kyiv has also signaled that any counterattacks in Russia are simply part of a war Russia started, and asked, perhaps fatalistically, what more could Russia do to Ukraine? After all, the Russian army is already engaged in a full-scale assault.

“If you decided to attack another country, commit mass murder, crush peaceful people with tanks, and to support murder using warehouses in your region, then sooner or later the time will come to repay that debt,” said Mykhailo Podolyak, a negotiator for President Volodymyr Zelesnky. “So, the disarmament of the killers’ warehouses in Belgorod and Voronezh regions is just a completely wholesome, natural process. Karma is a harsh thing.”

Mr. Arestovych’s comment on Ukrainian policy was the most forthright so far laying out the Ukrainian government’s position of ambiguity, even as officials in Kyiv have been openly suggesting Russians should expect a continuing spat of mysterious fires.

So far, Ukraine has received public support from Britain for directly attacking Russia, with James Heapey, an official in the Foreign Secretary’s Office, saying the strikes were “completely legitimate” given the role of fuel and ammunition depots in Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Heapey also endorsed the use of British-supplied weaponry, saying its use to strike inside Russia was “not necessarily a problem.”

The Russian military, which has been firing missiles and artillery at Ukrainian cities and military targets including fuel depots, continuously for two months now, warned on April 13 against Ukraine striking back.

The ministry spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, told Russian news agencies that Russia would respond by targeting the Ukrainian leadership. “We see efforts at diversions and strikes by the Ukrainian military at objects in the Russian Federation,” he said. “If these instances continue, the Russian army will target decision making centers, including in Kyiv.”

Three major fires inside Russia followed that warning, including near Moscow, at a military research institute in the city of Tver.

In the Ukrainian military, the arson fires and helicopter assault into Russian territory have also served the purpose of lifting morale. Having seen the effectiveness of their small unit tactics against the Russian army in the battle for Kyiv in March, midlevel Ukrainian commanders have suggested continuing this strategy inside Russia.

“It will not end until we bring the war to Russia,” said the commander of a Ukrainian brigade, who asked that he be identified only by his nickname, Akula, because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

“It’s not a secret that the Russian people support the war, that it is not just Putin and the rest of the Russians are peaceful,” he said.

	“We need to make Russian society fear” attacks on their own country to shift perceptions, he said. “They need to send people like me to Russia.”
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Volunteers exhuming Kyiv region’s dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/kyiv-civillians-dead-volunteers-exhuming-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/kyiv-civillians-dead-volunteers-exhuming-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>In the woods on a roadside near Borodianka, 40 miles from Kyiv, police were overseeing the exhumation of two men who were executed and buried next to what locals say was a Russian military checkpoint.</p> <p>Alongside the officers were four men in civilian clothing wearing gardening gloves – ordinary Ukrainians with no previous experience of this gut-wrenching work who have become volunteers collecting the hundreds of bodies still being dug up in towns bordering the capital.</p> <p>It has been a month since the Ukrainian army pushed Russian forces out of Kyiv region, yet local police and volunteers are still finding new graves. More than 1,000 bodies have been recovered there according to Ukrainian prosecutors, who said many more people were killed by bombs, making their remains hard to find.</p> <p>The police forces of small towns and quiet villages have been plunged into investigating one of the largest atrocities in Europe in recent times. Amid the unfathomable scale of this endeavour, officers are relying on ordinary Ukrainians to do the heavy lifting while they take statements and document the deaths.</p> <p>The volunteer body collectors are tasked with picking up rotting and often mutilated bodies from the graves, putting them in body bags, numbering them and then, at the end of each day, driving the total number of bodies collected to whichever morgue in Kyiv region has room.</p> <p>“I didn’t know this is what we’d be doing,” said Vasily Pasioka, a middle-aged driver for a construction company in Chernivtsi region, western Ukraine, who was driving the van which carries the bodies. “But someone has to do it for the relatives, for the police.”</p> <p>“I am a simple driver. I’ve been behind the wheel for 40 years,” said Pasioka.</p> <p>Their employer, Mekhtransbud, wanted to do something to help when they saw the news about the mass atrocities in Kyiv region. They called one of the improvised humanitarian aid centres, who said they needed a van and manpower.</p> <p>Pasioka and his colleague Serhiy Roholsky volunteered to go to the region with one of the company’s vans. The company, they said, was paying for their stay at a hotel while they volunteered.</p> <p>“We pick up between 8 to 11 bodies a day,” said Roholsky, who said they had only been working in the small town of Borodianka and its surrounding villages since they arrived two weeks ago.</p> <p>Roholsky had just picked up two bodies from a dug-up grave in the woods and placed them on a path with the help of two other male volunteers in their early twenties. “Every day it’s different but we find all sorts – men, women, young, old, middle-aged.”</p> <p>One of the two bodies was a pension-aged man whose head had been severed, the whereabouts of which is still unknown. Both corpses were twisted and mangled. It looked as though their limbs had been broken in several places.</p> <p>The son of the man whose head had been severed, Serhiy Kubitsky, was there to witness the exhumation and give a statement to the police. He and his family had left the village for the safety of western Ukraine when the war started, but his father had not wanted to leave.</p>

“I didn’t believe it was him when they told me,” said Kubitsky. He said that his neighbours found his father’s body in the woods near the Russian checkpoint on 17 March and buried him on the spot. The neighbours then returned to the grave yesterday to dig it up under police supervision.

“Then they showed me his documents,” said Kubitsky. In the trunk of his car were the spades used by his neighbours to exhume the bodies.

Every day, Pasioka and Roholsky go from their hotel to the humanitarian aid centre where their company’s van is refuelled, then they pick up two new volunteers to help them collect the bodies.

Even amid the daily hell of the task, the two worst instances in the relatively small area of Kyiv region where they have been volunteering, Roholsky said, were when a 15-year-old girl was exhumed from a mass grave near the town’s GP surgery and when they dug up the body of an elderly man who had been doused in petrol and set alight. The witness who recounted the story to Roholsky was the elderly man’s wife, who said she had been tied up by Russian soldiers and forced to watch.

After the two men in the woods, the next stop was the cemetery of a nearby village, where the team were to dig up two buried bodies in order to register the cause of death.

Stanislav Kozynchuk, the deputy head of the Kyiv region prosecutor’s office, said the two people who had been buried in the cemetery were killed by airstrikes, which he had reason to believe may have used clusters bombs.

Evidence collected by the Guardian during visits to Bucha, Hostomel and Borodianka – and reviewed by independent weapons experts – showed that Russian troops had used cluster bombs, which are widely banned across the world, as well as extremely powerful unguided bombs, which are not permitted for use in populated areas and are responsible for the destruction of several blocks of flats in Kyiv region.

At the cemetery, one of the victims’ wives, Alla Kuzmenko, said that her husband had gone out to help neighbours after a bomb hit a house across the road. She started following him but turned back to put the dog in the house when a second bomb hit and killed him.

“My dog likes to run between people’s legs, I didn’t want her to be running riot,” said Kuzmenko.

Deputy prosecutor Kozynchuk said that all bodies not buried according to the law needed to be exhumed and examined until every cause of death was determined by a forensic doctor after an autopsy – only after that could such bodies be buried.

“Because of war, there was no chance to do the autopsies, the civilians just buried the body and later reported to the police the location of the grave. It doesn’t matter whether the body was buried in a cemetery or somewhere in a field, if it wasn’t documented it has to be exhumed,” said Kozynchuk.

“It is essential that all bodies are exhumed and identified so that victims’ families can be informed, and the exact causes of death established,” Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights, has said. “All measures should be taken to preserve evidence.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/30 Global vaccine inequity due to racism
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/apr/30/covid-vaccine-inequity-due-to-racism-rooted-in-slavery-and-colonialism">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/apr/30/covid-vaccine-inequity-due-to-racism-rooted-in-slavery-and-colonialism</a>
GIST	Racism rooted in slavery, colonialism and apartheid is responsible for higher Covid death rates among people of African and Asian descent, as well as Roma and Indigenous peoples, a UN body has said.

That the vast majority of Covid-19 vaccines were administered in high and upper-middle-income countries replicated “slavery and colonial-era racial hierarchies”, according to the committee on the elimination of racial discrimination (Cerd).

The committee said a failure to redress injustices has denied basic human rights to health and worsened discrimination and exclusion. In a strongly worded statement released on Friday, the group said it was concerned that the pandemic’s disproportionate impact “is in significant part attributed to consequences of the historic racial injustices of slavery and colonialism that remain largely unaccounted for today”.

The unequal distribution of vaccines between and within countries “manifests as a global system privileging those former colonial powers to the detriment of formerly colonised states and descendants of enslaved groups,” the statement added. As of April 2022, only 15.21% of low-income country populations has received one vaccine dose.

Peruth Nabirye from EqualHealth, a global healthcare campaign, said it was important to hold countries where pharmaceutical companies are located accountable for fostering health inequities. She said: “We are still tied up in systems of injustice and we are at the mercy of the global north to save our lives.”

The Cerd statement singled out the UK, Germany and Switzerland for continuing to block a waiver on lifting intellectual property rules that would enable the redistribution and scaling-up of the Covid response.

India and South Africa first proposed the temporary waiver on WTO rules for intellectual property in October 2020.

Meena Jagannath, director of global programmes at Movement Law Lab and coordinator of the Global Network of Movement Lawyers, said: “It is unacceptable for states to privilege intellectual property rights of pharmaceutical companies over the human rights of people.”

She added: “The decision to side with pharma has deepened racial discrimination that is the product of unaddressed policies of colonialism and slavery.”

Cerd is a body of independent experts that monitors how member states implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted in December 1965. Under the convention, member states – including the UK – are charged with eliminating all forms of racial inequity and ensuring equality without discrimination on the grounds of “race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin”.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 New Mexico: 1,000 firefighters battle wildfire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/more-than-1000-firefighters-battle-150-square-mile-wildfire-in-new-mexico">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/more-than-1000-firefighters-battle-150-square-mile-wildfire-in-new-mexico</a>
GIST	<p>More than 1,000 firefighters backed by bulldozers and aircraft battled the largest active wildfire in the US on Saturday after strong winds pushed it across some containment lines and closer to a town in northern New Mexico.</p> <p>Preliminary overnight mapping imagery indicated that the fire that has burned at least 166 homes grew in size from 103 square miles on Friday to 152 square miles by early Saturday, officials said.</p> <p>Ash carried seven miles through the air fell on Las Vegas, population about 13,000, and firefighters were trying to prevent the blaze from getting closer, said Mike Johnson, a spokesperson for the fire management team.</p> <p>Calmer winds on Saturday were aiding the firefighting effort after gusts accelerated the fire’s advance to a point on Friday when “we were watching the fire march about a mile every hour”, said Jayson Coil, a fire operations official.</p>

Winds gusted up to 65 mph on Friday before subsiding as nightfall approached. By Saturday, aircraft that dump fire retardant and water could resume flights to aid ground crews and bulldozers.

The fire's rapid growth on Friday had forced crews to repeatedly change positions because of threatening conditions but they managed to immediately re-engage without being forced to retreat, Coil said. No injuries were reported.

"Kind of a nod to everybody out there that made good decisions on the fly with limited information in a chaotic environment with direct personal threat," Coil said. "They did an excellent job."

The winds first sent the flames advancing furiously on 22 April across the northern New Mexico landscape. Since then, crews have worked to limit structural damage by installing sprinklers, pumps and hoses and clearing vegetation around buildings, officials said.

With that work and five times as many firefighters now tackling the fire, they were in much better position than a week earlier and were on track to make "tremendous progress", Carl Schwoppe, the incident management team's commander said on Friday.

The fire on Saturday was contained around about a third of its larger perimeter, down a little from Thursday. The fire started on 6 April when a prescribed burn set by firefighters to clear out small trees and brush that can fuel fires was declared out of control. That fire then merged with another wildfire a week ago.

With the fire's recent growth, estimates of people forced to evacuate largely rural areas plus a subdivision near Las Vegas doubled from 1,500 to 2,000 people to between 3,000 and 4,000, said Jesus Romero, the assistant manager for San Miguel County.

Officials have said the fire has destroyed 277 structures, including at least 166 homes. No updated damage assessments were available on Saturday, Romero said.

Wildfires were also still burning on Saturday elsewhere in New Mexico and in Arizona. The fires are burning unusually hot and fast for this time of year, especially in the south-west, where experts said some timber in the region is drier than kiln-dried wood.

Wildfires have become a year-round threat in the west given changing conditions that include earlier snowmelt and rain coming later in the autumn, scientist have said.

The problems have been exacerbated by decades of fire suppression and poor management along with a more than 20-year megadrought that studies link to human-caused climate change.

In northern Arizona, firefighters neared full containment of a 30 square mile blaze that destroyed at least 30 homes near Flagstaff and forced hundreds to evacuate. A top-level national wildfire management team turned oversight of fighting the blaze back to local firefighting forces on Friday.

National forests across Arizona announced they would impose fire restrictions starting next Thursday that limit campfires to developed recreation sites and restrict smoking to inside vehicles, other enclosed spaces and to the recreation sites.

"Given current drought conditions and the 'very high' fire danger level, it is too risky for these activities," said Taiga Rohrer, fire management officer for the Tonto national forest.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/30 UK: depleted Russia units regroup
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/depleted-russian-units-that-failed-to-take-kyiv-ukraine-are-merging-says-mod">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/depleted-russian-units-that-failed-to-take-kyiv-ukraine-are-merging-says-mod</a>



## GIST

Russian troops have been forced to merge and redeploy units from their “failed advances” in Ukraine’s north-east, the UK Ministry of Defence has said, as both Kyiv and Moscow deal with serious losses on the frontline in the Donbas region.

“Russia hopes to rectify issues that have previously constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control,” a British military intelligence report released early on Saturday said.

“It has been forced to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in north-east Ukraine. Many of these units are likely suffering from weakened morale.”

After Moscow’s withdrawal from the areas north of Kyiv early in April, which revealed the brutality of mass graves, with hundreds of civilian corpses buried in residential districts, about two weeks ago the long-anticipated large-scale military operation in the Donbas and second phase of the war began, with Russian forces carrying out one of the biggest barrages of missile strikes since the beginning of the invasion.

According to figures reported by the Russian news agency Interfax, Moscow’s artillery units hit 389 Ukrainian targets overnight, including 35 control points, 15 arms and ammunition depots, and several areas where Ukrainian troops and equipment were concentrated.

The statement added that Russian missiles also struck four ammunition and fuel depots.

The report has not yet been independently verified.

However, while acknowledging its own heavy losses from Russia’s attacks in the east, Kyiv has claimed to have inflicted “colossal” Russian losses during Moscow’s effort to fully capture the eastern Donbas region.

“We have serious losses, but the Russians’ losses are much, much bigger ... They have colossal losses,” said a Ukrainian presidential adviser, Oleksiy Arestovych.

The English-language newspaper Kyiv Independent tweeted a graphic showing a tally of Russia’s combat losses caused by Ukraine’s armed forces, using data from the Ukraine military.

According to the indicative estimates, as of 30 April, 23,200 Russian soldiers have been killed since the beginning of the invasion. Losses include the destruction of 190 Russian planes, more than 1,000 tanks, eight naval vessels, about 1,700 small vehicles, almost 2,500 armoured personnel carriers and 436 artillery systems.

Ukraine’s second city, Kharkiv, was hit by more deadly shelling on Saturday while Ukrainian forces made some gains in the surrounding region.

Although Ukraine has retained control of Kharkiv, the city has been repeatedly battered by Moscow’s forces and still faces daily attacks.

One person was killed and five injured in artillery and mortar strikes, Kharkiv’s regional military administration said on the Telegram app.

“The situation in the Kharkiv region is tough. But our military, our intelligence, have important tactical success,” the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said in his latest televised address.

Ukrainian forces said they had recaptured the village of Ruska Lozova, near Kharkiv, which had been occupied by Russian troops for two months, and evacuated hundreds of civilians.

The Pentagon spokesperson, John Kirby, on Friday briefly choked with emotion as he described the destruction in Ukraine and denounced Putin's "depravity".

Ukrainian prosecutors say they have pinpointed more than 8,000 war crimes carried out by Russian troops and are investigating 10 Russian soldiers for suspected atrocities in Bucha near Kyiv.

It has been a month since the Ukrainian army pushed Russian forces out of the Kyiv region, yet local police and volunteers are still finding new graves. More than 1,000 bodies have been recovered there, according to Ukrainian prosecutors, who said many more people were killed by bombs, making their remains hard to find.

Ukrainian police on Saturday reported finding three bodies with their hands tied behind their backs as Russia continued shelling the east. The bodies were found on Friday in a pit near Bucha, a town close to Kyiv that has become synonymous with allegations of Russian war crimes.

Moscow on Friday confirmed it carried out an airstrike on Kyiv during a visit by the UN secretary general, António Guterres.

Zelenskiy called for a stronger global response after the strike, saying that "a deliberate and brutal humiliation of the United Nations by Russia has gone unanswered".

Guterres had also toured Bucha and other Kyiv suburbs where Moscow is alleged to have committed war crimes.

Guterres tweeted on Friday: "I was moved by the resilience and bravery of the people of Ukraine. My message to them is simple: We will not give up."

He added: "The UN will redouble its efforts to save lives and reduce human suffering. In this war, as in all wars, the civilians always pay the highest price."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Day 67 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-67-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-67-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The British Foreign Office said on Sunday that Russia was using a troll factory to spread disinformation about the war in Ukraine on social media and target politicians across a number of countries</b>, including Britain and South Africa. "We cannot allow the Kremlin and its shady troll farms to invade our online spaces with their lies about Putin's illegal war," said the foreign secretary, Liz Truss.</li><li>• <b>Twenty wounded civilians were able to evacuate from the besieged Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol</b>, and were likely on their way to Zaporizhzhia. Satellite images show nearly all the buildings of the plant have been destroyed.</li><li>• <b>Ukraine has carried out a prisoner exchange with Russia, with seven soldiers and seven civilians coming home</b>. One of the soldiers was a woman who was five months pregnant, Ukraine deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, said online. She did not say how many Russians had been transferred. On Thursday, Ukraine said Russia had handed over 33 soldiers.</li><li>• <b>The Hollywood actor and UN humanitarian envoy Angelina Jolie made a <a href="#">surprise visit to the western Ukrainian city of Lviv</a> on Saturday</b>, the regional governor said on Telegram. Jolie, who has been a UNHCR special envoy for refugees since 2011, came to speak to displaced people who found refuge in Lviv, including children undergoing treatment for injuries sustained in the missile strike on the Kramatorsk railway station in early April. "She was very moved by [the children's] stories," Maksym Kozytskiy wrote.</li><li>• <b>The UK Foreign Office is investigating reports that a British national has been detained by Russia after a video emerged showing a man in camouflage clothes being questioned</b>. In the unverified video, reportedly shown on Russian television, the man appeared to give his name as</li></ul>

Andrew Hill. He spoke with an English accent, has his arm in a sling, a bandage around his head, and a bloodied hand.

- **In an address on Saturday night, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Ukraine would be free.** “All ... temporarily occupied cities and communities in which the occupiers are now pretending to be masters will be liberated ... The occupiers are still on our land and still do not recognise the apparent failure of their so-called operation. We still need to fight and direct all efforts to drive the occupiers out.”
- **The mayor of Mariupol said the Russian military had killed twice as many of the city’s residents in two months of war as Nazi Germany did in two years of occupation during the second world war.** Vadym Boychenko said that the Nazis killed 10,000 civilians; the Russians had doubled that number, [Boychenko said](#), as well as deporting more than 40,000 people.
- **Ukrainian police found the bodies of three civilian men in the Bucha district north of Kyiv, tied up and in some cases gagged,** the regional police chief said. He said the bodies were found to have several gunshot wounds and signs of torture.
- **Russian troops have been forced to merge and redeploy units from their “failed advances” in Ukraine’s north-east,** the [UK Ministry of Defence has said](#), as both Kyiv and Moscow deal with serious losses in the Donbas region. “Russia hopes to rectify issues that have previously constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control.”
- **Ukraine’s military estimated 23,200 Russian soldiers had been killed since the beginning of the invasion,** while Ukrainian prosecutors said they had recorded more than 8,000 war crimes by Russian troops and were investigating 10 Russian soldiers for suspected atrocities in Bucha near Kyiv.
- **Russia has said the risks of nuclear war should be kept to a minimum,** according to its Tass news agency. Vladimir Yermakov, the foreign ministry’s head of nuclear non-proliferation, said: “The risks of nuclear war, which should never be unleashed, must be kept to a minimum, in particular through preventing any armed conflict between nuclear powers. Russia clearly follows this understanding.”
- **Russia and the west are nearer to nuclear war than during the Cuban missile crisis, the great-granddaughter of Nikita Khrushchev has said.** Nina Khrushcheva, an academic whose great-grandfather was leader of the Soviet Union during the 1962 crisis, warned the war in Ukraine appeared to be more dangerous as neither side seemed willing to “back off”. She said both the US president John F Kennedy and Khrushchev agreed to de-escalate as soon as nuclear war became a real threat.
- **Russian forces have stolen “several hundred thousand tonnes” of grain in the areas of Ukraine they occupy,** according to Ukraine’s deputy agriculture minister. Speaking to Ukrainian national TV, Taras Vysotskiy expressed concern that most of what he said was 1.5m tonnes of grain stored in occupied territory could also be stolen by Russian forces.
- **A Russian missile strike on Odesa airport has damaged the runway, rendering it unusable,** but there were no casualties reported.
- **Russia bombarded Ukraine’s second city, Kharkiv, as part of its renewed push in the east of the country,** while claiming the “draft of a possible treaty” between the two countries was being discussed on a daily basis.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Russia war strains economic cooperation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-war-in-ukraine-is-straining-global-economic-cooperation-11651318201?mod=hp_major_pos1#cxrecs_s">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-war-in-ukraine-is-straining-global-economic-cooperation-11651318201?mod=hp_major_pos1#cxrecs_s</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—A rift between Western democracies and Russia and China is forcing policy makers to figure out how to keep conversations alive among nations with diverse views as they face economic challenges arising from the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Indonesia’s announcement Friday that it has invited the leaders of Russia and Ukraine to a November meeting of the Group of 20 economic powers underscored the complex task facing the U.S. and its</p>

Western allies. They must not only confront Russia but also work with nations caught in the middle and concerned about being left out of policy talks.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said that he had invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the summit in Bali as the group's host this year. Mr. Widodo said Mr. Putin has accepted the invitation. The G-20, a group that includes Russia, China and influential emerging-market nations, as well as Western powers, has served as a venue for discussing global economic issues.

The White House said Friday that President Biden opposes Mr. Putin's attendance at the G-20 meetings in November. "There's a lot that could happen between now and then, but we certainly haven't seen an indication to date of Russia's plan to participate in diplomatic talks constructively," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said.

The Russian Embassy in Washington didn't respond to a request for comment.

Finance ministers and central bankers from around the world who gathered for meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington in April experienced first hand the challenges in a world torn by the Ukraine war and stressed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

While tensions remained high throughout the weeklong gathering, the rift between the nations became most apparent when Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and other Western officials walked out of a G-20 session as Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov, who joined the meeting virtually, started speaking.

The nations representing the IMF left the meetings without issuing a routine communiqué outlining policy priorities. The G-20 reported little progress in a top task: preparing a common framework to respond to spreading debt crises in developing countries.

"We can't really solve certain global challenges, climate or pandemic readiness...without a broader grouping," said Mark Sobel, a former Treasury Department and IMF official who now serves as U.S. chairman of the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum, a think tank. "We are in a bit of a stalemate."

Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who chaired the G-20 meeting in April, said in an interview that the walkout was a carefully orchestrated mechanism that allowed Russia to attend the meeting while giving the U.S. and others an opportunity to demonstrate their disapproval.

She added that the officials from the U.S., the U.K., Canada and some other countries were out of the room for a few minutes but were present for the rest of the meeting. The delegations of some U.S. allies, including Italy and Japan, didn't walk out of the meeting.

"The fact that we could still have a meeting with all the ministers in attendance and continue to focus on the substance and still achieve progress...was really remarkable," said Ms. Mulyani. "I think it is still manageable."

The minister said that for weeks before the meeting she had intense discussions with Ms. Yellen and other G-20 counterparts to hammer out a strategy. Some members of the Group of Seven advanced economies first asked Ms. Mulyani to disinvite Russia. When she pushed back, they requested that Moscow be barred from speaking.

Yet nearly half of the G-20 members told Ms. Mulyani that Russia should be invited, she said. In the end, she persuaded the U.S. and others to agree to the walkout, timed to minimize the impact on the meeting's agenda.

“The objective was to save the G-20 as the premier forum of cooperation while at the same time provide a forum in which they can express their feelings about the invasion of Ukraine,” she said. “That was exactly the compromise format.”

The survival of the G-20, which gained a prominent role during the 2008-09 financial crisis to give a diverse range of countries a voice in global economic policy discussions, is important for countries such as hers, Ms. Mulyani said. The group also includes Argentina, Brazil, India, South Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey.

While the U.S. has called for Russia’s removal from the G-20, Ms. Yellen said during a recent press conference that the group lacked consensus on such a move.

“I think we looked for a way to make our disapproval known while still recognizing we have a lot of work to accomplish,” Ms. Yellen said.

Ukrainian Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko, whom the Western nations had successfully pushed to attend the meeting, said in an interview that he had hoped more countries would have joined the walkout, while adding that he still appreciated remarks many countries made condemning the invasion.

The tensions in the G-20 come as the world faces food insecurity stemming from the war, a lingering pandemic and longer-term challenges such as climate change.

DJ Nordquist, a former U.S. executive director of the World Bank who was a White House economic official in the Trump administration, said the tensions “could doom multilateralism at a time when we need open channels and cooperation the most.”

The experience of the G-20 and other meetings in Washington offers a lesson for other international groups on how to keep conversations going in the midst of confrontation, according to officials.

“As soon as the Russian minister finished speaking, they came right back and the business continued,” Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director general of the World Trade Organization, who attended the April meeting and is now preparing for a ministerial meeting of her group in June, told reporters Tuesday. “We expect the same. We will have to find methodologies for working around now.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 China manufacturing activity plummets</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-manufacturing-activity-contracted-further-in-april-11651285563?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-manufacturing-activity-contracted-further-in-april-11651285563?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING—Readings of Chinese factory and service-sector activity worsened dramatically in April, falling to their lowest levels since the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak, as recent lockdowns in dozens of cities across the country shut factories and pummeled consumer spending.</p> <p>China’s National Bureau of Statistics said Saturday that its official manufacturing purchasing managers index dropped to 47.4 in April, from 49.5 in March, falling to its lowest level since February 2020. The result fell short of the median forecast of 48.0 among economists polled by The Wall Street Journal, and well below the 50 mark that separates expansion from contraction.</p> <p>The subindex of factory production plummeted to 44.4 in April from 48.8 in March, the statistics bureau said. The sharp decline came as factories reduced or halted production due to the spreading virus, said Zhao Qinghe, a senior official at the statistics bureau.</p> <p>The rapid deterioration in the manufacturing reading offers a first glimpse into the stark economic cost of China’s zero-tolerance approach to the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, which put the entire northeastern province of Jilin and dozens of cities—including Shanghai, a bustling financial hub of 25 million residents—under weeks of lockdown. Most of the harshest measures were imposed in late March.</p>

Worried about the highly transmissible variant and seeking to avoid a Shanghai-style hard lockdown, many other regional governments across the country pre-emptively curtailed people's movements after detecting just a few infections, crushing economic activity.

Even regions with no Covid cases have been seriously affected by the current wave of concern spreading across the country. Apart from the closure of factories inside locked-down regions, trucks have been stranded on the road as local authorities bar outside traffic, snarling logistics networks.

Some factories otherwise approved to continue operations have been forced to halt production because of a lack of raw materials. Finished products, likewise, have been stuck in warehouses, unable to be delivered.

"Many enterprises reported increasing difficulties in logistics and transportation, as well as difficulties in the supply of major raw materials, poor sales of finished products, overstocking and so on," Mr. Zhao said. As a result, he added, the production and operation of businesses up and down the supply chain were greatly affected.

The rapid economic cooling adds further pressure to Chinese policy makers' hopes of meeting its official target of expanding gross domestic product by around 5.5% this year—a goal that is seen as increasingly difficult given rising risks from Covid-19 outbreaks, knock-on effects from the war in Ukraine, a sharp property-sector downturn and anemic consumer spending.

Factory output had already weakened in March as restrictions thinned workforces and gummed up supply chains. Retail sales, meanwhile, tumbled as Covid concerns and restrictions kept people from venturing outdoors and spending money.

The recovery from the current wave of outbreaks will likely be slower and more muted than the roaring rebound from the initial Covid outbreak in early 2020, said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics. Mr. Evans-Pritchard points to weaker policy support from Beijing and the challenges facing the export sector, a key engine of the country's economic rebound two years ago.

This time around, exports—already predicted to slow after two years of a bigger-than-expected boom—are showing particular vulnerability to the disarray in domestic production and transportation capacity.

The subindex tracking export orders dropped deeper into contraction territory, to 41.6 in April, from a reading of 47.2 in March. The subindex measuring total new orders, likewise, fell to 42.6 in April, from 49.5 the previous month.

Separately, China's official nonmanufacturing purchasing managers index, also released Saturday and tracking both the services and construction industries, plunged to 41.9 in April from 48.4 in March. Nineteen out of 21 surveyed industries, including transportation, accommodation and catering, recorded contractions in activity, the statistics bureau said.

The 41.9 reading was China's lowest since the 29.6 level recorded in February 2020, as the central Chinese city of Wuhan was put under strict lockdown.

The subindex measuring service activity tumbled to 40.0 in April, from 46.7 in March, while the subindex tracking construction activity dropped to 52.7 from 58.1 in March.

A separate private gauge of manufacturing activity, also released Saturday, pointed in the same direction. The Caixin China purchasing managers index, which is tilted more toward smaller companies, slipped to 46.0 in April from March's 48.1.

China said its economy grew 4.8% in the first quarter when compared with a year earlier, though most of that growth was squeezed into the first two months of the year, before the current wave of Omicron infections.



	<p>Some economists have begun to predict that the economy could contract in year-over-year terms during the second quarter.</p> <p>China, though, has rarely missed its economic growth target in years past. In recent days, the government has signaled more fiscal measures to stimulate the economy and ward off a slowdown.</p> <p>In a Friday meeting of the Politburo, the Communist Party's top decision-making body, leader Xi Jinping and other senior officials pledged to meet this year's economic targets, describing infrastructure in particular as a lever to ramp up growth.</p> <p>Economists at ANZ, an investment bank, compared the remarks on infrastructure spending to the massive stimulus package that Beijing unleashed in 2008 to revive the economy.</p> <p>The government has also made preparations to ease off on a monthslong regulatory campaign against technology companies, the Journal has reported, part of the broader effort to arrest the rapid deterioration in the economic outlook.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Open-source investigations into war crimes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/citizens-images-of-potential-war-crimes-in-ukraine-flood-the-internet-but-might-not-hold-up-in-court-11651311001?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/citizens-images-of-potential-war-crimes-in-ukraine-flood-the-internet-but-might-not-hold-up-in-court-11651311001?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>Each morning as he sips his coffee, Giancarlo Fiorella opens Telegram, a social-media app popular in Ukraine, and starts scanning for videos of <a href="#">potential war crimes</a>—attacks on schools, or use of cluster munitions.</p> <p>When he finds something, he goes through a lengthy process to verify that the video is real. A single clip usually takes about an hour. Then he begins the process over again.</p> <p>“There are tons and tons of images coming out every single day,” said Mr. Fiorella, an analyst for Bellingcat, an open-source investigative organization.</p> <p>Open sources, like videos on social media, have become an essential part of the effort to document <a href="#">war crimes in Ukraine</a>. Satellite images show the aftermath of bombings to anyone who wants to look. Images and videos depicting what appear to be violations of international law are popping up online faster than during any previous conflict. Data <a href="#">drawn from a variety of public sources</a> can be triangulated to track the movement of Russian military units.</p> <p>Although hundreds of professional investigators—from the Ukrainian general prosecutor's office, the International Criminal Court, and several other European countries—<a href="#">are at work on the ground</a>, they can't keep up with the flood of material.</p> <p>As a result, much of the work of capturing evidence is now falling to amateurs.</p> <p>Nonprofit groups are photographing bomb sites and interviewing victims. The Ukrainian government has created a website where witnesses can send in evidence; it has received thousands of submissions. And a phalanx of volunteers is combing the internet for photos and videos of potential war crimes and preserving the posts in case they are later deleted.</p> <p>The civilian efforts have helped keep the world's attention on Ukraine. But it remains an open question whether any of the evidence will hold up in court, especially if it is conducted by volunteers without much experience.</p> <p>“The proliferation of open-source investigators can go two ways,” said Siobhan Allen, of Global Legal Action Network, which has worked with Bellingcat to establish protocols for using open-source data in</p>

court cases. The growing use of open sources could help normalize them in court, she said. “But if 90% of people are doing it in a slapdash way...it’s only going to increase the perception that it’s not trustworthy.”

Russia’s first invasion of Ukraine, in 2014, was a turning point for open source-investigations. After Malaysia Airlines flight 17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine that year, Bellingcat used satellite imaging, geolocated photos online and intercepted phone communications released by the Ukrainian authorities to connect the missile launching system used in the attack to a specific Russian brigade.

By the time Russia [began its invasion in February](#), open-source investigations had become a staple of many human-rights groups. Established organizations such as Amnesty International now employ open-source specialists. The ranks of volunteers poring over images from the conflict—and working to confirm the time and place when they were made—grows by the day.

Denys Rabomizo, a maritime lawyer in Ukraine, manages a team of about 50 volunteers who work to verify footage of alleged attacks on civilians. He offers online training for those without experience, some of whom sift through war footage in their spare time after work.

“We try to supply some kind of guidance,” he said. “We expect this evidence will be used by, for instance, the International Criminal Court.” He is also in touch with Ukrainian prosecutors.

But data from open sources is untested at the ICC, and it has been tossed out by national courts in some cases. While satellite images have been used at trials for decades, the person who recorded a video traditionally needs to testify to its authenticity in court. With many videos posted online, the authors are unknown.

A number of efforts to professionalize the collection of open-source data are under way. The Ukrainian government has released an app for citizens with a chatbot that advises how to record reliable video, including capturing the surrounding area on screen so it can be more easily verified later.

In 2020, Lindsay Freeman, law and policy director for the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, helped draft what became known as the Berkeley Protocol, a set of principles for handling digital media so it could be used in court. Bellingcat has developed a methodology its investigators say is consistent with the protocol: Investigators take several steps—including using virtual private networks (VPNs) and clearing browsing data—to minimize algorithmic bias and ensure the security of their investigators. It is a slow, painstaking process that logs each step investigators take.

Ms. Freeman is working with the 5 AM Coalition, a group of two dozen Ukrainian nonprofits of which Mr. Rabomizo is a part, to help them archive what they find. She didn’t expect everyone would be able to follow the protocol, she said.

“Some of them are more professionalized—we’ll be working with them,” she said, adding that data collected by volunteers could prove more difficult to use in court. “A lot of this stuff people are collecting is not going to be very helpful.”

Once investigators from Bellingcat or 5 AM have identified videos of interest online, they send them to Mnemonic, a Berlin nonprofit, to be preserved.

Since the war in Syria began, Mnemonic has collected about 1.7 million videos of potential war crimes. An artificial intelligence tool then helps the company search those videos for certain crimes, like the use of cluster munitions, and sort them for relevance.

In just eight weeks, Mnemonic has archived about 500,000 videos from Ukraine, all of them collected by people, not machine. An AI tool to sort Ukraine videos could be expected to come online later this year.

	<p>Both the Ukrainian government and the ICC have expressed an intent to use technology to help document war crimes in Ukraine. Still, prosecutors from both jurisdictions are expressing skepticism about using photos and videos from the internet.</p> <p>Ruslan Kravchenko, the chief regional prosecutor in Bucha, said members of his team would try to find the creators of any videos they intended to use in court.</p> <p>Prosecutors for the ICC, in an online meeting with nonprofit groups in Ukraine, said any videos they obtain should include metadata, as well as documentation about who recorded it and in what circumstance, according to people who were present for the meeting. A representative for the ICC didn't respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Mr. Rabomizo, of the 5 AM Coalition, acknowledged that not all the evidence his group was collecting would meet prosecutors' standards. Helping prosecutions, he said, wasn't the only goal of documenting war crimes. He also wants to show the outside world what's happening in Ukraine.</p> <p>"We help them," he said of the prosecutors, "but we're not guided by their rules."</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukrainians suffer fuel shortages</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukrainians-suffer-gasoline-shortages-after-russian-strikes-on-fuel-infrastructure-11651313479?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukrainians-suffer-gasoline-shortages-after-russian-strikes-on-fuel-infrastructure-11651313479?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>DIDOVYCHI, Ukraine—About two dozen civilians were evacuated Saturday from <a href="#">the besieged steel plant in Mariupol</a>, while elsewhere Ukrainians faced fuel shortages and rising prices following recent <a href="#">Russian missile strikes</a> on oil refineries and storage depots in the country.</p> <p>On Saturday afternoon, the Mariupol city council announced plans for <a href="#">an evacuation of residents</a> from the occupied city, though it didn't confirm whether it had gone ahead. Russian state media reported on Saturday that a group of 25 civilians including six children, were evacuated <a href="#">from the Azovstal plant</a>, where Ukrainian forces and civilians have been holed up for weeks.</p> <p>Russian media had also shown videos of vehicles from the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross preparing for civilian evacuations in Mariupol. Representatives of the U.N. and the ICRC didn't respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The Azov regiment's deputy commander, Svyatoslav Palamar, confirmed in a video posted to Telegram that both sides had upheld a promised cease-fire that commenced Saturday morning. He said that at 6:25 p.m. an evacuation team arrived to spirit out civilians. He said they were headed for the city of Zaporizhzhia.</p> <p>Mr. Palamar added that many more holdouts in the plant still need to be evacuated. "We ask guarantees for the departure not only of civilians but also our wounded service members who require necessary medical help," he said.</p> <p>Separately, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said in a Telegram post that <a href="#">a prisoner exchange took place</a> on Saturday in which seven civilians and seven military personnel, including a pregnant fighter, returned to Ukraine. There was no comment on the subject from Russian officials.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials planned to address the fuel shortages through new contracts from Western Europe.</p> <p>"The occupiers are deliberately destroying the infrastructure for the production, supply and storage of fuel," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday night. "Russia has also blocked our ports, so there are no immediate solutions to replenish the deficit."</p> <p>"Queues and rising prices at gas stations are seen in many regions of our country," he added.</p>

Gasoline shortages were felt by the thousands of Ukrainians traveling across the country to return to homes they left behind when the war began on Feb. 24, now that [Russia has shifted its military campaign](#) to the east and south from the capital, Kyiv. People driving from western Ukraine to Kyiv and towns nearby waited on Friday in lines for gasoline that grew as they approached the capital.

Most gasoline stations were rationing fuel to 10 liters, or a little over 2.6 gallons, per customer, and some had run out altogether. Some lines stretched for a quarter of a mile, one for each filling pump.

“We have no idea if we’ll get a delivery any time soon,” said Oleksandr Kovalchuk, a service-station attendant off the E40 highway leading from Lviv in western Ukraine to Kyiv.

At another station on the same route, drivers had to provide cellphone numbers to which a code would be sent authorizing them to refill with 10 liters of gasoline. Each customer was allowed one code and would be denied further refills at other stations operated by the same company, West Oil Group SA, a cashier said.

Father Roman Danchivskyi, an Orthodox priest who was en route to celebrate Mass in the capital, had canisters totaling 60 liters of gasoline in the trunk of the minivan he was traveling in with family and friends. He said he had stopped at three stations since leaving Lviv, waiting 40 minutes at the first one he visited outside the city.

“If you plan ahead, you’ll be fine,” he said. “But the war is clearly affecting our lives.”

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko on Friday pinned the shortages on Russian attacks on the Kremenchuk oil refinery and other locations holding fuel reserves. She said the issue would be resolved over the next seven days through Western European contracts, resulting in slightly higher fuel prices. She didn’t explain how the fuel would be delivered to Ukraine but it could potentially enter by rail and truck tankers crossing in from Poland and other neighboring countries.

Authorities in Kyiv said drivers should restrict the use of private vehicles except in urgent cases, as more residents returned to the Ukrainian capital following the withdrawal of Russian forces from the area.

“Today, we have different priorities for fuel,” Kyiv official Mykola Povoroznyk said, urging residents who have returned to the capital to use public transit.

The Kyiv administration pointed out that city buses, trams, trolleys and private buses are operating on a total of nearly 200 routes, and the Kyiv Metro rapid-transit system is running all day.

On April 2, the Russian Defense Ministry said it used high-precision long-range weapons to damage gasoline and diesel fuel-storage facilities at the Kremenchuk refinery, which has supplied Ukrainian troops in central and eastern parts of the country.

The strike came after Russian officials accused Ukraine of firing missiles at an oil depot in Belgorod, a Russian city 20 miles from the Ukrainian border, in a predawn helicopter raid a day earlier.

Thousands of people have died and millions have been displaced since Russia invaded Ukraine, with fears growing that the conflict could spill over into other countries. The war has raised the specter of a wider confrontation between the world’s two biggest nuclear powers. U.S. officials say they aim to see Russia’s military force degraded.

On the battlefield, Ukrainian troops on Friday hoisted the country’s flag above the town of Ruska Lozova, north of Kharkiv, the country’s second-largest city. Russian forces had seized Ruska Lozova and pressed into Kharkiv on the first day of the war, using positions there to shell the city’s residential neighborhoods. The recapture of Ruska Lozova follows other Ukrainian advances north of Kharkiv as Ukrainian troops aim to reduce Russia’s ability to strike the city with artillery.

Aiming to stall a Russian advance in the eastern Donbas region, Ukrainian forces Friday blew up a railway bridge near the town of Lyman, according to footage broadcast on national television. Heavy fighting continued across the Donbas front, with both sides releasing videos of destroyed enemy armor.

The head of the Odessa regional military administration, Maksym Marchenko, said the Odessa airport had been struck Saturday with missiles fired from Crimea, the peninsula Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. No one was injured in the attack but a runway was damaged, he said.

Ukrainian officials and Western analysts say Russian forces are making slow progress.

On the road, Sergey Zhelepa, a marketing specialist, was traveling with his wife and 1-year-old daughter, Polina, from Lutsk, a city in western Ukraine where the family relocated for safety after Russia invaded. On Friday, they were heading back to their Kyiv home.

“Before, you had so much choice at gas stations, with two different types of diesel and three options for gas,” he said. “Now there’s very little left anywhere.”

For Yury Surinets, who works at a firm that makes electronic security systems, gasoline is also a necessary commodity to power the generator he and his family run at their home in Makarov, a town near Kyiv that was heavily shelled by Russian forces in the early days of the war and has been left largely without power.

Mr. Surinets and his family left Makarov on Feb. 25 as part of a relocation of his company’s staff to the Zakarpattia region in western Ukraine, but were returning to replant their garden and check on their home.

“When you travel, you have to have backup supplies because the situation is even worse in the Kyiv region,” he said. “And we have to be able to get back to the west soon.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Saudi Arabia: Eid al-Fitr begins Monday</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/saudi-arabia-announces-official-start-eid-al-fitr/8271651356506/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/saudi-arabia-announces-official-start-eid-al-fitr/8271651356506/</a>
GIST	<p>April 30 (UPI) -- Saudi Arabia's <a href="#">Supreme Court</a> on Saturday announced that Eid al-Fitr, the three-day holiday celebrating the end of fasting for Ramadan, would begin Monday.</p> <p>The supreme court indicated that the fasting would continue through Sunday because the crescent moon, which marks the beginning of the Shawwal month of the Muslim lunar calendar, was not seen.</p> <p>The decision, made by the department of the Supreme Court tasked with sighting the crescent moon, was announced in a report from the official <a href="#">Saudi Press Agency</a>.</p> <p>King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the country's ruler, received calls from President Abdelfattah El-Sisi of Egypt, Qatar emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain congratulating him on the advent of Eid al-Fitr.</p> <p>The International Astronomical Center, based in Abu Dhabi, said <a href="#">in a statement</a> to Twitter that the United Arab Emirates had also announced Monday as the start of Eid al-Fitr along with Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan and Turkey.</p> <p>Palestinians were seen preparing for Eid al-Fitr on Saturday in the market in Bethlehem, West Bank. Some were seen getting a haircut and shave while children lined up for sweets and others bought meat and other foods for the breaking of the fast.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Russia: submarine cruise missile attack</b>
----------	--

SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/russia-defense-ministry-confirms-submarine-missile-attacks-ukraine-shelling-border-russian-troops-moved-eastern-ukraine/8091651319957/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/russia-defense-ministry-confirms-submarine-missile-attacks-ukraine-shelling-border-russian-troops-moved-eastern-ukraine/8091651319957/</a>
GIST	<p>April 30 (UPI) -- Russia's Defense Ministry has confirmed earlier Ukrainian military claims that it used a submarine in the Black Sea to launch cruise missile attacks on <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>The ministry confirmed the attacks by releasing video Friday appearing to show a diesel submarine in the Black Sea launch Kalibr cruise missiles on Ukrainian targets, <a href="#">CNN reported</a>.</p> <p>"The crew of a diesel-electric submarine of the Black Sea Fleet has launched a salvo of Kalibr cruise missiles from the Black Sea against the military infrastructure of the Ukrainian armed forces," the ministry said on the Telegram messaging app, according to CNN.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military said a week ago that the Russian fleet was still operating "submarines with missile weapons," among two dozen units in the Black Sea.</p> <p>Russian troops were "launching missile and bomb strikes on military and civilian infrastructure, including from strategic bombers, ships and submarines," the Ukrainian armed forces added on Monday.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a witness <a href="#">told CNN</a> she heard on Saturday at least two explosions in the southern city of Odessa, and she was still experiencing hearing difficulties due to the noise from them.</p> <p>Also, on Saturday, shelling in the Russian border region continued.</p> <p>The shelling hit an oil terminal in the village of Zhecha in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Ukraine, causing damage, but there were no casualties, Regional Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said in a statement Saturday.</p> <p>On Friday, Bogomaz <a href="#">said in a</a> Telegram post the border department of the Federal Security Service reported another incident of shelling in a nearby village, Belaya Berezka, alleging that the mortar fire came from territory of Ukraine. In that incident, Bogomaz said that water and electricity networks were damaged, but there were no casualties.</p> <p>Russian forces have moved troops normally stationed in far-eastern Russia to the battle lines in eastern Ukraine, adding that it was an attempt to gain momentum in a "plodding" offensive there, the Ukrainian military said Saturday, <a href="#">The New York Times reported</a>.</p> <p>The Russian troops are being deployed to the Russian city Belgorod, near the Ukrainian border, then to an area around the northeastern Ukrainian city of Iziun, the Ukrainian military said.</p> <p>The British Defense Ministry <a href="#">added in an</a> intelligence update on Saturday that since the Russian military was defeated in their push to take Kyiv in the eastern front, it has had "to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in northeast Ukraine."</p> <p>"Many of these units are likely suffering from weakened morale," the British Defense Ministry added.</p> <p>"Russia hopes to rectify issues that have previously constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control," the British Defense Ministry also said.</p> <p>Still, continued attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure have taken a toll, including Russian forces <a href="#">striking the</a> Kremenchuk oil refinery this week, Ukraine's main producer of fuel products, along with several other large refineries, leading to fuel shortages.</p> <p>"The occupiers are deliberately destroying the infrastructure for the production, supply and storage of fuel," Ukrainian President <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelensky</a> told the nation in his nightly address. "Russia has also blocked our ports, so there are no immediate solutions to replenish the deficit."</p>



	Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24, 2,899 civilians have been killed and 3,235 have been injured, <a href="#">according to</a> a United Nations human rights office's latest update.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 UW forecasts 'normal' wildfire season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/departement-of-natural-resources-normal-wildfire-season-for-2022/281-79c29a69-8885-4ed6-81f3-0e305b29da1e">https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/departement-of-natural-resources-normal-wildfire-season-for-2022/281-79c29a69-8885-4ed6-81f3-0e305b29da1e</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is already gearing up for wildfire season in 2022. The University of Washington forecasts a “normal” wildfire season ahead, but even so, fire activity is still expected on both sides of the Cascades.</p> <p>“This time of year is what we call our training season and our readiness season,” said DNR Assistant Division Manager of Plans and Information Angie Lane.</p> <p>The department is spending the spring months readying their personnel and deciding where they’re going to send resources during the summer months. The DNR is also acquiring more firefighting resources through contracts and completing any agreements they have with cooperators and partners.</p> <p>It’s hard to forecast specifically what this year’s fire season will be like, but early conditions show it will likely be a “normal” season – not extraordinarily different from the past couple of years. Still, that “normal” baseline has been changing.</p> <p>"As we know, even the normal fire season here includes a lot of fire activity," said Brian Harvey with the University of Washington School of Environmental and Forest Sciences.</p> <p>An increasing amount of area burned in the western US over the last several decades is strongly linked to climate as conditions become warmer and drier, Harvey said.</p> <p>"Not surprisingly that's creating conditions that are very conducive for fires spreading across the landscape," Harvey said.</p> <p>Another driver of major wildfires is fewer small fires occurring in fire-prone landscapes.</p> <p>“Fire plays an ecological role in supporting the forest, grassland, shrubland, throughout western North America,” Harvey said.</p> <p>In dry forests, frequent fires clear out fuel buildups like dead branches, brush and excess vegetation. If fires happen less often, more fuel accumulates, meaning when a fire does spark, they’re more intense than it otherwise would have been, Harvey said.</p> <p>In anticipation of fire season, the DNR is currently working to hire and fill positions the department added with new funding from the legislature. Lane says it is also prepared with 120 engines ready to go, along with 10 medium helicopters for delivering water, a helicopter for observation, single-engine air tankers, and other technology.</p> <p>While peak fire season is months away, DNR staff have recently fought some small fires, likely caused by debris burning, and are asking people to be fire aware.</p> <p>“They're small fires, but we're still pursuing and chasing those fires,” Lane said. “We really want the public to pay attention to things like debris burning, make sure they're doing it safely. Help us help them. Keep fires small this spring, let's not have bigger fires than we need to this year.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Grocery store workers new 3yr-contract</b>
----------	---

SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/puget-sound-grocery-store-workers-approve-new-contract-includes-pay-increase">https://komonews.com/news/local/puget-sound-grocery-store-workers-approve-new-contract-includes-pay-increase</a>
GIST	<p>DES MOINES, Wash. - On Saturday, Puget Sound grocery store workers approved a new three-year union contract that will include a wage increase and an elimination of lower pay scales.</p> <p>The contract includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wage increases of \$4 to \$9 an hour over the three years.</li> <li>• Elimination of lower pay scales in departments such as the deli and bakery which workers say are disproportionately staffed by women, immigrants, and people of color.</li> <li>• Increased funding to workers' Health Care plans.</li> <li>• Increased funding for to workers' pensions.</li> <li>• Stronger ability to address safety issues beyond COVID-19 protections.</li> <li>• A \$500,000 contribution from the employers to fund the new Workplace Training program.</li> </ul> <p>"This contract is a historic deal. No one in our industry in this region has ever seen wage increases like this and it will go a long way to address inequities in Fred Meyer stores," said Jeff Smith, grocery store worker and bargaining team member, Snohomish, Fred Meyer.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Russia renews push, bombards Kharkiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/russia-bombards-kharkiv-but-ukrainians-having-tactical-successes-says-zelenskiy">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/russia-bombards-kharkiv-but-ukrainians-having-tactical-successes-says-zelenskiy</a>
GIST	<p>Russia has bombarded Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, as part of its renewed push in the east of the country, while claiming the "draft of a possible treaty" between the two countries is being discussed on a daily basis.</p> <p>One person was killed and five were injured "as a result of enemy artillery and mortar strikes", Kharkiv's regional military administration said on Telegram. Despite the bombardment, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said: "The situation in the Kharkiv region is tough. But our military, our intelligence, have important tactical success."</p> <p>Ukrainian forces said they had recaptured a "strategically important" village of Ruska Lozova, near Kharkiv, and evacuated hundreds of civilians.</p> <p>One Kharkiv resident, Antonina, told AFP she returned home to find a rocket had smashed through her building and lodged in her bathroom. "When I came home, everything was destroyed ... It was scary," she said.</p> <p>Three months into an invasion that failed in its short-term aim of capturing Kyiv, <a href="#">Russia</a> is now intensifying operations in the eastern Donbas region and tightening its stranglehold on the devastated southern port city of Mariupol.</p> <p>A senior Nato official said Russia had made only "minor" and "uneven" advances in their attempt to encircle enemy positions as Ukrainian forces counterattacked. The Pentagon said the Kremlin's eastern offensive was "behind schedule" as airstrikes were failing to facilitate lightning ground offensives.</p> <p>Russia has been forced to merge and redeploy units from failed advances in Ukraine's north-east, the UK's Ministry of Defence has said in its latest intelligence report released on Saturday morning. "Russia hopes to rectify issues that have previously constrained its invasion by geographically concentrating combat power, shortening supply lines and simplifying command and control.</p> <p>Russia still faces considerable challenges. It has been forced to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in north-east Ukraine. Many of these units are likely suffering from weakened morale.</p>

“Shortcomings in Russian tactical coordination remain. A lack of unit-level skills and inconsistent air support have left Russia unable to fully leverage its combat mass, despite localised improvements.”

Zelenskiy said in his address that Russia wanted to make Donbas “uninhabited”.

“The occupiers are doing everything to destroy any life in this area,” he said. “Constant brutal bombings, constant Russian strikes at infrastructure and residential areas show that Russia wants to make this area uninhabited.”

Zelenskiy described Mariupol as a “Russian concentration camp in the middle of ruins”.

“And the order of the occupiers in that part of Mariupol which they unfortunately still control differs insignificantly from what the Nazis did in the occupied territory of eastern Europe,” he said.

Ukrainian authorities said they had planned to evacuate civilians on Friday from the besieged Azovstal steel plant, the last holdout in Mariupol where hundreds were sheltering with Ukrainian troops.

Ukraine’s president called for a stronger global response to [Thursday’s strikes on the capital Kyiv](#), which immediately followed his talks in the city with the UN’s secretary general, António Guterres. “It is unfortunate, but such a deliberate and brutal humiliation of the United Nations by Russia has gone unanswered,” he said.

Guterres had also toured Bucha and other Kyiv suburbs where Moscow is alleged to have committed war crimes. Russia denies killing civilians. Guterres posted online afterwards: “I was moved by the resilience and bravery of the people of Ukraine. My message to them is simple: we will not give up.”

Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, claimed that a million people had fled Ukraine for Russia. Ukraine says people have been taken over the border against their will.

Discussing the peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv, Lavrov, said the lifting of sanctions imposed on Russia was part of the negotiations. He said talks were “difficult” but continued daily by video conferencing.

Kyiv, though, has warned that talks are in danger of collapse, and Zelenskiy has insisted since the invasion that western sanctions on Russia needed to be strengthened and could not be part of negotiations. Ukraine and Russia have not held face-to-face peace talks since 29 March.

In his latest address, Zelenskiy also said Ukraine would soon stamp out fuel shortages, even though Russian forces had damaged a number of oil depots.

This week, Russia struck Ukraine’s main fuel producer, the Kremenchuk oil refinery, as well as several other large depots.

“Queues and rising prices at gas stations are seen in many regions of our country,” Zelenskiy said. “The occupiers are deliberately destroying the infrastructure for the production, supply and storage of fuel.

“Russia has also blocked our ports, so there are no immediate solutions to replenish the deficit.

“But government officials promise that within a week, maximum two, a system of fuel supply to Ukraine will be at work that will prevent shortages.”

The economy minister, Yulia Svyrydenko, said the shortages would be eliminated within a week, as Ukraine’s operators had secured contracts with European suppliers.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/gas-was-like-our-drug-defiant-poland-vows-to-wean-itself-off-russian-energy">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/gas-was-like-our-drug-defiant-poland-vows-to-wean-itself-off-russian-energy</a>
GIST	<p>Headteacher Natalia Pałczyńska was in a state of shock after the heating and hot water at her primary school went off without warning on Wednesday. “We were completely taken aback,” she said. Unless the gas starts flowing again soon, she said, “we’ll have no choice but to close our doors until it does”.</p> <p>The school, in Mieścisko, a village in western Poland, was in one of about 10 administrative districts in which homes, health centres, kindergartens and local businesses – as well as thousands of residents – lost heating after Moscow <a href="#">halted gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria</a> at 8am on Wednesday. The affected area was relatively small, and unusual in that it was solely dependent on Russia for gas. But it was seen as an indication as to what could happen on a wider scale if Moscow turned off supplies to countries far more dependent than Poland which, while it gets 40% of its gas needs from Russia, only uses gas for 9% of its energy requirements.</p> <p>Mateusz Morawiecki, the prime minister, complained of a “direct attack”, accusing <a href="#">Russia</a> of “putting a pistol to our heads”, but said Poland would “manage so that the Polish people will not feel any change”, and urging Poles in a televised address: “please don’t be afraid”.</p> <p>But in Mieścisko at least, the fear was palpable. The phones of the mayor’s office were ringing constantly as residents called in to say they had been, as one local woman told Polish TV, “shut down by Putin”.</p> <p>The Kremlin said it had halted supplies because of Warsaw and Sofia’s failure to respond to its demand to pay for gas in roubles. The two EU members, which are among the most vocal supporters of a swift withdrawal from Russian gas, said they would not give in to blackmail and that the provocative step was one they could handle.</p> <p>But it has pushed Europe to the brink of an energy crisis, prompting a 20% increase in the already rising wholesale gas price. There is anxiety that Russia could do the same elsewhere, such as to Gazprom’s most important customer in Europe, Germany – which takes 55% of its gas from Russia and has paid it €5bn for gas and oil since the start of the <a href="#">Ukraine</a> conflict – or to others, such as Italy, Finland, Croatia or Latvia, which are also heavily reliant on Moscow.</p> <p>Industry in <a href="#">Poland</a> is putting on a brave face. “We are quite well prepared for this,” said Tomasz Zieliński, president of the board of the Polish Chamber of Chemical Industry, which represents about 13,000 businesses and more than 320,000 jobs. In his office in downtown Warsaw, he cited the fact that Poland’s gas storage facilities were 76% full, compared with an EU average of only 30% (33% in Germany). The government had spent years working with businesses to reduce their dependency on Russia, he said.</p> <p>In 2015 a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal was opened in the north-west port city of Świnoujście, close to the German border, capable of covering a quarter of Poland’s gas needs. It is being extended to increase intake by about 10%. Shots of its yellow, snaking pipes have frequently provided the backdrop for recent TV reports and government interviews in which attempts are made to reassure Poles. It has become something of a symbol of the nation’s hope in <i>bezpieczeństwo energetyczne</i> (energy security), the new buzz phrase.</p> <p>This autumn, the much-hailed Baltic pipeline, viewed as a response to the German-Russian Nord Stream 2 project, is scheduled to go into operation. Running from Norway through Denmark to Poland, it will be able to carry about 10 billion cubic metres of gas every year, about half of the national requirements. Another pipeline nearing completion will connect Poland to the LNG terminal in the Lithuanian port city of Klaipėda, and existing pipelines connect Poland with Germany and the Czech Republic.</p> <p>“Poland was not surprised by what’s happened, it was something that was always expected,” said Joanna Maćkowiak-Pandera, head of Forum Energii, an NGO spanning business, administration and science, which focuses on energy transition. She hoped it might speed up Poland’s slow decarbonisation efforts not least, she said, because “it’s now clear to most people that sales of fossil fuels have literally fuelled Russian aggression”.</p>

The image being projected by business and politics may be one of stoicism, and it has helped to unify a polarised country, but “the atmosphere is extremely nervous”, she said.

Interview requests to 12 manufacturers highly reliant on gas, from glass to cardboard producers, were rejected, with one admitting the “issue is right now too delicate” to talk about.

The government has downplayed Poland’s dependence on Russian coal, said Maćkowiak-Pandera, which supplements inadequate domestic supplies and is used to heat a large percentage of Polish homes. “Only recently have people become aware that it’s Russian coal that gives us our dirty air and there is a lot of pressure to stop this,” she said. “In a way, this is more significant for us than the gas issue.”

She asked whether the national drive for *derusyfikacja* (de-Russification) would push the issue of *dekarbonizacja* (decarbonisation) down the agenda, further increasing the demand for coal, or – as she hoped – help to wean Poland off it. Support for phasing out Russian coal is high – 94% of citizens in a recent poll said they were ready to pay more in order to switch from Russian supplies. “But no one says how much they would be prepared to pay,” she said. Household coal prices have already risen by 300% in the past year. “So, as a consequence, we expect to see a lot of energy poverty this coming winter.”

There is speculation that the frenzied effort to meet the rising demand for coal may have caused two deadly explosions last week at mines in Silesia, southern Poland, killing 18 miners, while seven others are still missing.

Bernard Swoczyna, a power engineer with the progressive thinktank InStrat, said that while he could not but be shocked by the events that have driven it, “a dramatic shifting of the window of discourse is taking place in Poland right now”. The idea of “diverting from fossil fuels from Russia was until recently a fringe idea, and now it’s viewed as a baseline scenario”, he said.

Poland has spent years telling its neighbours [Europe](#) must move away from Russian supplies. The word *niepodległość* (independence) has a deeply emotional meaning linked to Poland’s past under the yoke of foreign powers, most recently the Soviet Union. Nowadays it is often used in relation to the energy debate.

History means that trust towards Russia was low from the outset, but everyday experience did not help. Over the past 18 years, Russian gas stopped flowing at least seven times, sometimes for a few days, once for half a year. “We were keen to be independent, for which we were sometimes accused of being Russophobe, particularly by German politicians. But this idea never flew in the financial markets, because the low price was the driving force,” Maćkowiak-Pandera said.

Paweł Różyński, an economic commentator in the conservative daily, *Rzeczpospolita*, said Russia was “like Pablo Escobar”. “Gas was like our drug and turned out to be very addictive because it was cheap, efficient and more ecological than other sources of energy. Poland has been forced to get sober very fast ... but we have lost a lot of time defending coal because we thought it protected our sovereignty ... and one of the side-effects will be much higher energy costs.”

For Wojciech Mróz, the cut is most important from a moral and ethical point of view. The 24-year-old student of spatial economics, who runs his own payment start-up, Pagaspot, has been at the forefront of efforts through a Catholic youth organisation to help some of the three million Ukrainian refugees who, border police report, have arrived in Poland since the start of the war. About 20,000-25,000 people still arrive each day, and the numbers are not expected to stop any time soon.

“It’s a good thing this has happened now as it saves our government from having to take this step themselves. And even if it won’t end the war, if we had kept taking the gas, it would not have stood well next to Poland’s huge national effort to help Ukrainian refugees and to save lives,” he said.



	<p>Maks De Doliwa Zieliński, 23, an economics student from Kraków, whose recent plans to take up a job with a German chemicals company in eastern Ukraine were scuppered by the war, said the situation was causing friction at home.</p> <p>“My father, a businessman, said we and Europe made a mistake by trusting Russia at all. We never should have.” His German mother, he said, thinks otherwise, arguing that Germany had nursed the naive hope of helping Russia move to a democracy through its close trade ties, (the <i>Wandel durch Handel</i> – or “change through trade” policy).</p> <p>“Poland was screaming at the Germans for a long time about the need to diversify, saying Russia was too unpredictable. But as we can see now, business has driven politics into a dark corner.”</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Day 66 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-66-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/30/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-66-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine has claimed “colossal” Russian losses have taken place in the effort to fully capture the eastern Donbas region.</b> While acknowledging its own heavy losses from Russia’s attacks in the east, Kyiv said casualties in the invading army were worse. “We have serious losses, but the Russians’ losses are much much bigger ... They have colossal losses,” said a Ukrainian presidential adviser, Oleksiy Arestovych.</li> <li>• <b>The Pentagon press secretary, John Kirby, has spoken of Vladimir Putin’s “cruelty and depravity” in Ukraine, calling his actions “unconscionable” and his justifications for the invasion “BS”.</b> “It’s hard to square his ... BS that this is about nazism in Ukraine, and it’s about protecting Russians in Ukraine, and it’s about defending Russian national interests, when none of them, none of them were threatened by Ukraine,” Kirby said. “It’s brutality of the coldest and the most depraved sort.”</li> <li>• <b>European Union countries are likely to approve a phased embargo on Russian oil as early as next week, according to EU officials.</b> European ambassadors are reportedly expected to agree to a finalised proposal by the end of next week after meeting on Wednesday, according to several EU officials and diplomats involved in the process.</li> <li>• <b>The US did not believe the threat of Russia using nuclear weapons despite a recent escalation in Moscow’s rhetoric, a senior US defence official said.</b> Russia was days behind its schedule on its military operations in Ukraine’s Donbas region, a US defence official said, and Russia’s fighting with Ukraine in the Donbas region would be a potential “knife fight”.</li> <li>• <b>Moscow has confirmed <a href="#">it carried out an airstrike on Kyiv during a visit by the UN secretary general, António Guterres</a>.</b> The defence ministry said two “high-precision, long-range air-based weapons” destroyed the production buildings of the Artyom missile and space enterprise in the Ukrainian capital on Thursday night.</li> <li>• <b>The mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, however, said a 25-storey residential building in the capital’s Shevchenkivskiy district was hit.</b> Klitschko said one body had been recovered. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty said one of its staff, the journalist and producer Vera Gyrych, had died “as a result of a Russian missile hitting the house where she lived” during Guterres’ visit.</li> <li>• <b>The situation inside the besieged Azovstal steel plant in the city of Mariupol was “beyond a humanitarian catastrophe”, a Ukrainian commander inside the facility said.</b> Serhiy Volyna, from the 36th separate marine brigade, said there were hundreds of people in the steelworks, including 60 young people, the youngest of them four months old. Ukraine hoped to evacuate civilians holed up in the steel plant with the last fighters defending the southern city, Zelenskiy’s office said.</li> <li>• <b>Two British aid workers who were reportedly captured by Russian forces in Ukraine have been named.</b> Presidium Network, a UK-based NGO that says it carries out evacuations of families and individuals from war zones, <a href="#">identified Paul Urey and Dylan Healy as the captured men</a>. The UK Foreign Office said it was seeking further information about the claims of their capture.</li> <li>• <b>A former US marine has been killed fighting alongside Ukrainian forces, the first US citizen known to have died in combat in the war with Russia.</b> Willy Joseph Cancel, 22, was killed on</li> </ul>



	<p>Monday while working for a military contracting company that sent him to Ukraine, <a href="#">his mother told CNN</a>. The US defence department warned US citizens that they should not go to Ukraine to fight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The US speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, said it would vote to pass Joe Biden's \$33bn request for aid for Ukraine "as soon as possible"</b>. Speaking at her weekly press briefing on Friday morning, the House speaker framed the administration's request as one of a number of "emergencies" Congress needed to address urgently.</li> <li>• <b>Britain will send investigators to Ukraine to help gather evidence of war crimes, including sexual violence, the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, has said.</b> <a href="#">Ukrainian prosecutors and the international criminal court have been investigating potential war crimes</a> in Ukraine since Russia's 24 February invasion.</li> <li>• <b>The US has begun training Ukrainian armed forces at sites located outside Ukraine.</b> A Pentagon spokesperson said it was happening at three sites outside the US, including one in Germany.</li> <li>• <b>Putin could announce the mass mobilisation of Russians on 9 May, Ben Wallace, the UK defence secretary, has said.</b> Wallace said that Putin could declare that "we are now at war with the world's nazis and we need to mass mobilise the Russian people".</li> <li>• <b>In an interview with Polish journalists, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said that since Russia's withdrawal from Kyiv, 900 bodies had been uncovered in mass graves.</b> The Guardian's Lorenzo Tondo confirmed with the deputy head prosecutor of Kyiv's region that 900 bodies had been found so far, buried in several mass graves around the region.</li> <li>• <b>In his latest address, Zelenskiy thanked the US for its support via a revived second world war-era lend-lease programme.</b> He also thanked countries that have resumed diplomatic operations in Kyiv, saying: "Such gestures, together with strong defensive, financial and political support from the free world, mean that the need to end the war is becoming more and more obvious to Russia."</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Key inflation indicator rises to 40yr-high</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/29/Personal-Consumption-Expenditures-inflation/8631651253031/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/29/Personal-Consumption-Expenditures-inflation/8631651253031/</a>
GIST	<p>April 29 (UPI) -- Inflation as measured by the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index rose to a 40-year high in March -- 6.6% for the year -- the Commerce Department announced Friday.</p> <p>The figure reflects an increase in consumer spending, up from 6.3% annually in February, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.</p> <p>March's rate was the highest since the year ending January 1982.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the annual Personal Consumption Expenditures price index not factoring in food and energy rose 5.2%, a slightly smaller increase than 5.3% a month ago. The BEA said energy prices rose 33.9% while food prices increased 9.2%.</p> <p>Personal income increased an estimated \$107.2 billion (0.5%), while disposable personal income increased \$89.7 billion (0.5%).</p> <p>"The increase in personal income in March primarily reflected an increase in compensation, proprietors' income, personal income receipts on assets, and government social benefits," the BEA said in a <a href="#">news release</a>.</p> <p>Inflation in services was widespread, led by international travel as well as food services and accommodations. Spending on goods saw an increase in non-durable goods, such as gasoline and energy, offset by a decrease in spending on durable goods such as motor vehicles and parts.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 FBI searches US data collected by NSA</b>
----------	--

SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-conducted-potentially-millions-of-searches-of-americans-data-last-year-report-says-11651253728?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-conducted-potentially-millions-of-searches-of-americans-data-last-year-report-says-11651253728?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The Federal Bureau of Investigation performed potentially millions of searches of American electronic data last year without a warrant, U.S. intelligence officials said Friday, a revelation likely to stoke <a href="#">longstanding concerns in Congress</a> about government surveillance and privacy.</p> <p>An annual report published Friday by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence disclosed that the FBI conducted as many as 3.4 million searches of U.S. data that had been previously collected by the National Security Agency.</p> <p>Senior Biden administration officials said the actual number of searches is likely far lower, citing complexities in counting and sorting foreign data from U.S. data. It couldn't be learned from the report how many Americans' data was examined by the FBI under the program, though officials said it was also almost certainly a much smaller number.</p> <p>The report doesn't allege the FBI was routinely searching American data improperly or illegally.</p> <p>The disclosure of the searches marks the first time a U.S. intelligence agency has published an accounting, however imprecise, of the FBI's grabs of American data through a section of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the 1978 law that governs some foreign intelligence gathering. The section of FISA that authorizes the FBI's activity, known as Section 702, is due to expire next year.</p> <p>While the ODNI report doesn't suggest systemic problems with the searches, judges have previously reprimanded the bureau for failing to comply with privacy rules. Officials said the FBI's searches were vital to its mission to protect the U.S. from national-security threats. The frequency of other forms of national-security surveillance detailed in the annual report generally fell year over year, in some cases continuing a multiyear trend.</p> <p>The 3.4 million figure "is certainly a large number," a senior FBI official said in a press briefing Friday on the report. "I am not going to pretend that it isn't."</p> <p>More than half of the reported searches—nearly two million—were related to an investigation into a national-security threat involving attempts by alleged Russian hackers to break into critical infrastructure in the U.S. Those searches included efforts to identify and protect potential victims of the alleged Russian campaign, senior U.S. officials said.</p> <p>Officials declined to give more details on the alleged Russian threat, including whether it was linked to the Russian government or a criminal hacking group. Russia has historically <a href="#">denied accusations of hacking</a> the U.S. or other nations.</p> <p>The number of searches of American data doesn't correspond to the number of Americans who may have had their personal information examined.</p> <p>An individual's name, telephone number, email addresses and social security number can all be searched, sometimes repeatedly, and each instance of each term would count as a search. Searches of U.S. information can pertain to data about U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents and U.S. companies. And searches can yield a mix of metadata and content of collected communications.</p> <p>One source of the discrepancy between the 3.4 million figure and the potentially much lower quantity of searches of Americans' data: Sometimes FBI analysts perform large searches of hundreds or thousands of terms, and if just one term in the batch is associated with an American or U.S. entity, all the terms would be counted as a potential search of U.S. data, officials said.</p> <p>The FBI conducted approximately 3.39 million searches that included terms, also called identifiers, linked to a presumed U.S. person from Dec. 1, 2020, to Nov. 30, 2021, according to the report. The number of searches for the previous 12-month period was about 1.3 million.</p>

The searches described by Friday's ODNI report concern a large repository of electronic data collected by the NSA under Section 702 of FISA.

Section 702 was passed into law in the years following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to enable the U.S. to spy on non-Americans overseas. The NSA uses the Section 702 program to collect intelligence from international phone calls and emails about terrorism suspects, cyber threats and other security risks.

Data on Americans is often vacuumed up as well, for example when a foreign spy is communicating with someone in the U.S. or when two overseas targets are talking about an American.

Some congressional lawmakers have asked the FBI to disclose how often it taps into that data to look at U.S. information, arguing that doing so amounts to a backdoor search on Americans that dispenses with requirements to obtain a warrant. U.S. intelligence officials have broadly defended Section 702 as among the most valuable national-security tools at their disposal.

Congress last [renewed Section 702 in 2018](#), and then-President [Donald Trump](#) signed the renewal into law after openly questioning the measure over unsubstantiated concerns that it was used to spy on his presidential campaign. It is set to expire again at the end of next year, and current and former intelligence officials have said they anticipate a bruising political battle.

"For anyone outside the U.S. government, the astronomical number of FBI searches of Americans' communications is either highly alarming or entirely meaningless," Sen. Ron Wyden (D., Ore.), a privacy advocate, said. "Somewhere in all that overcounting are real numbers of FBI searches, for content and for nonconsent—numbers that Congress and the American people need before Section 702 is reauthorized."

At a conference later Friday, Matt Olsen, the chief of the Justice Department's national security division, said agencies were discussing what they could declassify about the use of Section 702 to demonstrate its value. He added that he expected to be able to share more information in the coming months.

The FBI has previously faced scrutiny for its oversight of how authorities plumb Section 702 data, including a rebuke from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court in 2018 that found some searches violated the constitutional privacy rights of Americans.

In response, [the FBI has imposed new safeguards](#) meant to better ensure compliance. Those include a requirement that all searches involving 100 or more query terms get additional approvals and that analysts actively opt in to search Section 702 data, rather than passively allowing it.

Friday's report also revealed four instances last year in which the FBI, due to specific factual considerations about a search of data, should have sought approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court before performing a search and looking at the content of U.S. communications that were produced.

The FBI has never sought approval from the court since the requirement was adopted in 2018, officials said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/30 Sweden, Finland undecided joining NATO
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/europe-sweden-finland-remain-undecided-nato-membership-troops-train/4481651291521/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/30/europe-sweden-finland-remain-undecided-nato-membership-troops-train/4481651291521/</a>
GIST	April 30 (UPI) -- The foreign ministers for Sweden and Finland said their nations remain undecided on membership as their troops conducted training with NATO.

Foreign ministers Pekka Haavisto of Finland and Ann Linde of Sweden said [during a press conference](#) Friday that the countries would be making the decision whether to join or not "in the same direction and in the same time frame."

"We already have ongoing cooperation. Of course, if our security environment becomes more challenging of course we can add bilateral planning, and it includes all sectors on military cooperation," Haavisto said.

Haavisto said that Sweden is Finland's "most important bilateral partner" while Linde said that "what Finland decides will very much affect what Sweden is going to decide" while each country respect the other's independence.

Linde said that Sweden's parliament is in the process of preparing an analysis report on NATO membership that is expected to be delivered on May 13. Haavisto added that the process to join NATO would take between four months to a year as 30 member states of the alliance ratify the agreement.

Finland and Sweden already have NATO partnership agreements that began in 1994 but which offer no security guarantees. The countries are examining whether to end their official neutrality and fully join NATO despite threats from Moscow that doing so would lead to an aggressive response from Russia.

This week, Finnish troops joined NATO forces in training exercises for mine countermeasures in the Archipelago Sea, according to a [press release](#).

On Friday, Swedish troops started submarine training exercises with NATO forces in the Baltic Sea. It was comprised of training in anti-submarine warfare, which included fixed-wing aircraft and helicopter operations and defensive procedures while entering and leaving port.

"Since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, NATO has further reinforced its deterrence and defense, on land, in the air, and at sea," the press release reads.

"Finland and Sweden are NATO's closest partners with years of experience training and operating alongside NATO allies."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Chechen fighters behind Bucha killings</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/chechen-soldiers-in-bucha-civilian-massacre-accused-of-killing-russian-comrades?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/chechen-soldiers-in-bucha-civilian-massacre-accused-of-killing-russian-comrades?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>BUCHA, Ukraine—Ihor Yuschenko, 61, a former colonel in the <a href="#">Ukrainian Armed Forces</a> who once served as the deputy chief of staff of ground forces in the Donbas in eastern Ukraine, watched in horror as a <a href="#">war crime</a> took place right outside his window in broad daylight.</p> <p>According to Yuschenko, a column of Russian troops advancing through the town stopped and opened fire on his street in central <a href="#">Bucha</a> on Feb. 27, killing two pedestrians. This column had included <a href="#">Chechen fighters</a> known as <i>Kadyrovtsy</i>, members of various military groupings who are loyal to Chechnya's local strongman, Ramzan Kadyrov, known as "Putin's soldier." Yuschenko said he was able to identify them by their black garb, their use of Islamic slogans, and Kadyrov's name on their body armor.</p> <p>About an hour later, their column was decimated by the Ukrainian army in a different part of town—but the Kadyrovtsy returned. "Many Chechen soldiers penetrated this street to kill Ukrainian civilian people," Yuschenko told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>He described how Chechen fighters, also dressed in black, shot up a car that had been driving down the street with at least "thirty bullets," according to Yuschenko, killing its occupants and causing it to come to a stop on the side of the road next to the apartment building he was staying in. The Kadyrovtsy then allegedly dragged the two dead people whom they had shot out of the car, left them by the side of the road, and drove off in the car themselves.</p>

Yuschenko's mother, Zina Yehorovna, his friend Pavel Kondratyev, and his neighbor Bogdan each confirmed these events to The Daily Beast. According to Bogdan, however, the Chechens then hit a civilian who had been trying to flee the scene with the car, leaving him hanging off the hood of the car before he slid off onto the street.

"It's simply a war crime what they have done here," Yuschenko said, standing next to the bench that the car had crashed into after the Kadyrovtsy allegedly attacked it. "This is not war."

Artem Hurin, a member of the city council of the neighboring town of Irpin who also serves as a deputy commander in Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, was one of the first people to visit Bucha after the Russians retreated. There, he heard numerous accounts from residents about life in areas like Yablonska Street, where a group of Kadyrovtsy who were supposed to advance onto Kyiv were stationed.

According to Hurin, Ukrainian civilians were not the only people the Kadyrovtsy allegedly brutalized in the town. Hurin said that residents he spoke to in Borodyanka, which lies northwest of Bucha, recounted what the Kadyrovtsy did with injured Russian soldiers they brought there from Bucha. "They would bring heavily wounded Russian soldiers to a big hospital they had there, and those who were very heavily wounded, they would just shoot them," he told The Daily Beast. "And no one other than the Kadyrovtsy did this."

Eyewitnesses [have alleged](#) that Kadyrovtsy had executed people as early as March 5, and Bucha Mayor Anatoliy Fedoruk [stated](#) Chechen units had tied white bands around prisoners' arms that were similar to the ones found on the bodies of executed civilians. Hurin said he saw evidence of executions and torture on bodies he found in the street, and spoke to a woman who endured four days of torture at the hands of [one Kadyrovtsy fighter and one Belarusian soldier](#) before they shot her husband in the head.

"They didn't allow them to do anything. There they just killed people through binoculars for example," Hurin said, describing what happened to people who tried to leave their homes to get food and water. "They just shot them."

He also confirmed previous reports about a local base at a glass factory on Yablonska Street, which Ukraine's ombudsman for human rights, Lyudmila Denisova, [said served as a torture chamber](#) operated by Russians and Chechens.

According to the Kyiv Oblast Police, the bodies of around [1,150 civilians](#) have been found throughout the Kyiv region since Russian forces retreated in late March and early April. In Bucha alone, over 400 people have been found dead so far, most of whom were killed by the town's Russian occupiers over the course of several weeks in March prior to their withdrawal from the town on April 1.

But accounts like Yuschenko's provide evidence that indiscriminate violence toward civilians was part of the Russian army's playbook in Bucha from almost the very beginning of the war itself, with Chechen Kadyrovtsy playing a key role in the brutality even early on—against local residents and their own fellow soldiers alike. A lot remains unknown about Chechen activity in Bucha, but new details and testimony from residents and local authorities are making it possible to form a clearer picture of Chechen forces' brutal presence in the town and their participation in the weeks-long war crimes against Bucha's residents.

Social media evidence, testimony from residents, and materials seized by Kyiv Oblast police suggest that the Kadyrovtsy regiments in Bucha most likely belonged to the Special Rapid Response Unit (SOBR) and (Special Purpose Mobile Unit) OMON, and that these units, along with other Russian troops, were likely responsible for a significant portion of the massacre that took place there.

According to independent security analyst Harold Chambers, who specializes in the north Caucasus, this sort of personal violence by Kadyrovtsy in Bucha comes as no surprise.



“What they do have experience in, in terms of military operations, is really these *zachistki*, these clean sweep operations,” Chambers said, speaking about a brutal style of house-to-house searches and killings that Russian forces perfected during the Chechen Wars in the 1990s and early 2000s. “It plays into their specialty of targeting civilian populations, and from the stories we’ve already heard out of Bucha, that’s very much what was going on.”

Despite their presence in Bucha in late February, Russian forces were not able to gain full control of the town until several days later on or after [March 2](#). The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense has identified the [64th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade](#) as one of the Russian military groups responsible for the massacre that ensued in Bucha throughout March, but evidence suggests they were not the only ones involved.

According to Andriy Halavin, the priest at the Church of the Holy Apostle St. Andrew the First-Called in Bucha, where a mass grave for around 280 people was dug during the Russian occupation, regiments that included SOBR and OMON units began to replace the original occupying forces later in March.

“At the beginning, even though they were, shall we say, strict, they were fair. At the very beginning they would just search my car and tell me to just continue with my work, and so on,” Halavin said. “But after that the others came.”

Andriy Nebytov, the head of the Kyiv Oblast Police which is responsible for Bucha, confirmed that SOBR and OMON units were present in the Kyiv region, citing documents seized by his police department that show lists of members of the regiments who had arrived in the area. Because the information will be used in future criminal cases against Russia, his office was unable to provide the list to The Daily Beast, but the documents are seen in [a video](#) Nebytov recently published.

On Feb. 27, Ukrainian forces [destroyed](#) a large column of vehicles that included Kadyrovtsy on Vokzal’na Street near Bucha’s train station, which lines up with Yuschenko’s account from that same day. The column had arrived in the town from Hostomel, which lies just to the northeast of Bucha, where Hussein Mezhidov, the Chechen commander of the “Yug” battalion of the 141st Special Motorized Regiment that forms the backbone of the Kadyrovtsy, [was seen in a video](#) on Feb. 26.

According to Chambers, the most likely Chechen unit present in Bucha on Feb. 27 was the SOBR “Akhmat” group. Nevertheless, Chambers noted that the pattern of organization of *Kadyrovtsy* units around Kyiv makes identifying specific fighting groups who had fought on that front particularly difficult.

“The Kadyrovtsy do not seem to be fighting as much in delineated units, they seem to be working more in combined groups,” Chambers said. “You have a lot of commanders overlapping together, so it seems less clear how the units were actually being separated.”

Militarily and strategically, Kadyrovtsy deployed to Kyiv Oblast served several purposes—some groups were designed to be strike teams meant to [assassinate Ukrainian President Zelensky](#) and his family if they were able to make it into Kyiv, but according to Michael Kofman, the director of the Russia Studies Program at CNA, these units’ primary purpose was a broader one.

“The Chechens have a real purpose. The Russian military needs manpower,” Kofman said. He added that the Kadyrovtsy were meant to be deployed into the cities, especially into Kyiv, in order to support soldiers from the Eastern Military District, who were supposed to hold the blockade of the capital, and to fight alongside airborne units within the city limits.

“These Chechen units and these auxiliaries were therefore really important for the urban fight, because a lot of the other units they’d send were pretty low on manpower availability,” he said.

Ultimately, none of that happened, and the Kadyrovtsy, together with other Russian units, were left to their own devices and given carte blanche to allegedly abuse and massacre the population of Bucha for weeks, as people like Yuschenko saw firsthand. Yuschenko said all his years of military service paled in comparison to his experiences in the town.

	<p>“There, you know where the front line is, you know where threats may come from,” Yuschenko said about his time fighting in eastern Ukraine. “This was much more frightening than the Donbas. From lieutenant, to platoon commander, to deputy chief of staff, this situation was the biggest terror of my life.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Spokane Valley ban: newspapers in city hall</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/spokane-valley-city-council-bans-newspapers-from-city-hall/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/spokane-valley-city-council-bans-newspapers-from-city-hall/</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The Spokane Valley City Council in eastern Washington in an unusual move has banned newspapers from the City Hall lobby.</p> <p>The council voted 4-2 this week to prohibit third-party publications from the lobbies of City Hall and the Spokane Valley Police Precinct, The Spokesman-Review reported.</p> <p>The decision most notably affects free newspapers owned by council member Ben Wick, and one that runs advertisements.</p> <p>The City Council had previously considered banning newspapers from all public properties, but a multipurpose facility that includes the Spokane Valley Senior Center was exempted.</p> <p>Mayor Pam Haley and council members Rod Higgins, Arne Woodard and Laura Padden said the ban was necessary, with some arguing the papers can’t be on city property because they contain campaign ads and election coverage.</p> <p>City Attorney Cary Driskell has said allowing the free papers in the City Hall foyer could be construed as a violation of state law.</p> <p>However, the state agency that oversees Washington disclosure laws and campaign finance said allowing newspapers in the lobby doesn’t violate state law.</p> <p>Kim Bradford, deputy director of the Public Disclosure Commission, said agency staff have reviewed Spokane Valley’s third-party publication concerns and concluded the distribution of free newspapers in City Hall is legal. Bradford emphasized the opinion represents staff consensus and isn’t a formal ruling.</p> <p>Council members Tim Hattenburg and Brandi Peetz voted against the newspaper ban.</p> <p>Peetz said the situation has been a waste of city resources.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Sound Transit Eastside light rail faces delay</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/sound-transit-eastside-light-rail-project-delays/281-757fe767-d922-46a6-a3ce-b1f8d627ca57">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/sound-transit-eastside-light-rail-project-delays/281-757fe767-d922-46a6-a3ce-b1f8d627ca57</a>
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — Sound Transit's light rail extension project connecting Seattle to the Eastside is experiencing more delays.</p> <p>The 14-mile-long, \$3.6 billion East Link project is <a href="#">planned</a> to have 10 stations from Seattle’s Chinatown-International District to Redmond. The extension was scheduled to open in the summer of 2023, but Sound Transit officials said a number of factors could push the date back.</p> <p>Officials said the main factors causing the project to run behind schedule include COVID-19 delays, the <a href="#">four-month concrete workers strike</a>, and quality issues on the I-90 segment of the alignment between the Chinatown-International District and South Bellevue stations.</p>



Sound Transit said crews identified defects in some of the concrete blocks attaching the rail to the concrete guideway structure, known as plinths. Officials said some of the plinths could be repaired, but in other locations, a portion of the entire concrete plinth needs to be demolished and replaced.

In addition, officials said Sound Transit will most likely extend the training period for their light rail operators, which could also delay the opening of the Eastside light rail stations.

Sound Transit officials said they're preparing for a quantitative risk assessment this spring to look at all the outstanding risk factors and various possible outcomes to assess and develop a revised timeline.

Officials said they are still optimistic the project be within budget and want to reassure future riders the light rail project will be safe.

When completed, Sound Transit [said](#) passengers would be able to “almost 40 miles of fast, reliable light rail, from the Eastside to downtown Seattle and Northgate and to Sea-Tac Airport and Angle Lake.”

Sound Transit said the travel time from Mercer Island to the University of Washington is projected to be 20 minutes, South Bellevue to Sea-Tac Airport to be 50 minutes, and the Redmond Technology Station to downtown Bellevue is 10 minutes.

Sound Transit said daily ridership, including the downtown Redmond extension, is projected between 43,000 and 52,000 passengers by 2026.

[Three new Link light rail stations](#) in Seattle’s University District, Roosevelt, and the Northgate neighborhoods opened in October. Trains run every eight minutes at peak hours, and passengers can expect to get from Northgate to Sea-Tac Airport in about 45 minutes.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Piecing together Seattle’s tourism recovery</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/piecing-together-economic-recovery-in-seattles-tourism-industry">https://komonews.com/news/local/piecing-together-economic-recovery-in-seattles-tourism-industry</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The push to reach pre-pandemic levels of tourism in Seattle is on. The Alaska cruise season kicked off on April 23 and will run all the way through mid-October. The Seattle-based Holland America started celebrating its new season of taking passengers to Alaska, Friday morning, with its Koningsdam docking in Seattle.</p> <p>“It’s great to come into a city like Seattle, and for us, the first time here with the Koningsdam,” said Staff Captain Sabine Ruehmann.</p> <p>Holland America's repeating this docking sequence 43 times this season in Seattle. Staff Captain Ruehmann is one of three female officers on board, telling me it's exciting every time, to dock a 300-meter-long ship, inch by inch.</p> <p>“It’s not a regular office job. You never know what to expect and that’s what I love about the ship,” said Ruehmann</p> <p>This ship arrived at 70% capacity, amid full COVID protocols.</p> <p>“I feel very safe very safe,” said Lori Belancic, a passenger on board, who lives in Vancouver.</p> <p>Holland America’s director of public relations says the entire crew is vaccinated and they developed a plan based on CDC guidelines.</p> <p>“There is a full plan in place with isolation cabins. We have separate ventilation for those cabins, we have different ventilation systems with HEPA filters for the entire ship. A very structured protocol that we have to adhere to,” said Erik Elvejord.</p>

Beyond feeling safe on board, Belancic tells me she's thrilled to get back on a cruise ship, her first since the pandemic started.

"I started cruising in 2006. My husband and I just go on Holland America pretty much exclusively," said Belancic.

They're such regulars, spending hundreds of nights on board, that they've achieved 5-star status in Holland America's loyalty program.

"As you walk around the streets of Seattle you see more and more people out. That's a great sign that means that people are venturing out there traveling, getting out in society," said Elvejord.

Passengers typically spend \$1,500 when they're transitioning on and off cruise ships in and around the Seattle area. That's revenue local businesses appreciate. They also get a big boost, every time a cruise ship docks. Elvejord, says Holland America makes a point of choosing local partners for much of what it needs on board.

"Every time we try to ship and Seattle were spending \$400,000 or more dollars and it's food, its drink, it's milk, it's eggs, it's fuel, its flowers, it's a piano tuner in town that has to come on and tune nine pianos," said Elvejord.

"We also feature Beecher's cheese sandwiches on our lunch menus we also have northwestern cuisine when it comes to our pinnacle Grill restaurant," said Saurabh Vaishampayan, the Food & Beverage Manager on the Koningsdam.

Plus, he said they feature beer, brewed exclusively for Holland America Line, from Pike Place Brewing.

"We have a huge selection of Pacific Northwest wines, a huge selection from Washington state. When it comes to the wine, we have an exclusive Château Ste Michelle Blend, which is a unique concept at sea. We are the first ship to have this concept where we serve different wines from the Château Ste. Michelle winery," said Vaishampayan.

Guests who visit the Blend Bar can learn about the terroir of regions where Chateau Ste. Michelle gets its grapes and even create their own blend from the five barrels on board.

"We also stock an additional inventory of seven days, just in case there are any unforeseen circumstances that will keep us longer," said Vaishampayan.

When guests are not eating or drinking, there are plenty of activities to keep them busy. Plus, the World Stage offers a fully immersive experience with nightly entertainment, plus cooking classes and BBC Alaska presentations.

The cruise industry is a major piece of the economic puzzle for Seattle to put together for a successful tourism season.

This year, cruise lines are bringing 300 cruises full of people, through about mid-October. John Boesche, with Visit Seattle, says they're feeling rather bullish about this year's season. Just in the last three weeks, he says they've already seen momentum building through conventions and meetings.

Even though they expect a lot from this tourist season for Seattle, Boesche says they likely won't see a full recovery from the pandemic, for about three years, working to build the shoulder travel seasons back up.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Firefighters prepare: busy wildfire season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/firefighters-preparing-for-another-tough-wildfire-season">https://komonews.com/news/local/firefighters-preparing-for-another-tough-wildfire-season</a>

NORTH BEND, Wash. — Firefighters across the region are bracing for the possibility of another difficult wildfire season --- and it's only the end of April.

But a crew of cadets and soon-to-be firefighters were already thinking about summer on Friday as they practiced building fire lines in a wooded area of North Bend.

Capt. Michael Tjosvold with Eastside Fire & Rescue said tough wildfire seasons have become the norm in Western Washington.

"It just seems like we're busier and busier every single season," he told KOMO News.

Statistics show more than one-third of the fires that crews responded to on lands protected by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources last year broke out in Western Washington. That was a significant increase from 2020.

Last summer, the Cedar Hills fire burned about 20 acres near Issaquah. It was the first time Eastside Fire & Rescue requested state resources, an agency spokesperson said.

"I think every time we have an incident like that, we learn how to operate with our neighbors," said Eastside Battalion Chief Seth Merritt. "So the politics that come into play with starting a state mobilization process, reaching out to the (Washington State Patrol) for authorization, and the resources that start showing up that are now in control of your incident and helping mitigate – that's a learning process for an agency that's never been through it."

It's a lesson that some agencies in the region are learning as they deal with an increase in fire-related calls.

Others are looking to fill a growing number of vacancies due to retirements and other factors.

And some, like the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, are grappling with hiring challenges.

"Some of our challenges that we're having this year is it is getting harder – and we're not alone in hiring," said Hilary Franz, State Commissioner of Public Lands. "We're not alone in hiring challenges as we're trying to fill our seasonal firefighters. Our federal agencies are also struggling."

"The less resources we have – the harder it is to fight fires," Franz said. "No matter how many fires we have. Right now, what we're trying to do is make sure we can staff up as quickly as possible, we can get the people trained as fast as possible and we're well-coordinated with our local fire districts."

"It's an ever-evolving process. I don't see it ending for many years to come trying to keep pace with – when these departments were started in the 70s and 80s here, we're hitting that timeline now where we're getting the massive turnovers and retirements. So trying to train people and get them up to speed with all the institutional knowledge that's been lost is gonna be key for us. That's what we're trying to do today," Merritt told KOMO News.

Firefighters are also pleading with property owners to take steps now to create a defensible space around their homes.

Lt. Michael Ray saw the impact those early preparations can have when the 244th Command fire burned approximately 275 areas in the Graham area in 2020.

"One of the big take-aways from our big fire on 244th is that one house has a defensible space that was maintained all the way around it," Ray said. "And the fire pushed through that whole area and there's minimal to no damage on those folks' homes."

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Massive demand private security services</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/private-security-companies-see-massive-demand-for-service-struggle-to-hire-more-officers">https://komonews.com/news/local/private-security-companies-see-massive-demand-for-service-struggle-to-hire-more-officers</a>
GIST	<p>Many businesses are starting to hire for the summer season. Private security companies said they are having a tough time filling jobs because of a massive demand for their services.</p> <p>Security guards with Iron and Oak Protective Services cover a lot of ground.</p> <p>“We patrol down here on 3rd Avenue from here at pine down to Pike Avenue,” said Security Supervisor Jackson.</p> <p>Now, more than ever, there’s a big demand for private security guards in Seattle.</p> <p>“All the security companies right now are fighting for the same group of experienced officers,” said Alexander Butowicz, the owner of iron and oak protective service.</p> <p>Butowicz said he has a 60-day wait list.</p> <p>“We’ve seen the demand go up five times compared to what it was before the pandemic,” Botowicz said.</p> <p>The rush is onto hire security officer now special events and festivals as well as to ensure the safety of individuals and businesses.</p> <p>“We have an immediate need for 40-50 people," Butowicz said.</p> <p>One office tower in downtown Seattle said they spend \$1,000 a day for security. Businesses said it’s expensive, but it’s a necessity.</p> <p>“It’s a massive change for our company," Butowicz said. "A lot of that is because of shortage of the police. May of the things police would deal with prior to pandemic. Now private security is filling that gap."</p> <p>Joe D'Amico, owner of Security Services Northwest, said his company has tripled in size in the past two years because of the demand for private security.</p> <p>“We’re looking for another 50-100 employees,” D’Amico said. “Not only for events it’s for retail, construction sites. We’re just seeing it across the board we’re seeing an uptick in the need for security officers and also deal with the homeless situation.”</p> <p>And because there are not enough security guards out there, D’Amico said his company started a week-long academy.</p> <p>“So, we can take someone that has no security experience and get them into that entry level at the end of five days of training,” D’Amico said.</p> <p>Private security companies often have armed and unarmed officers. Many times, the armed officers are former law enforcement or military.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

## Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Romania: govt. websites attacked</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/romanian-government-says-websites-attacked-by-pro-russian-group/">https://therecord.media/romanian-government-says-websites-attacked-by-pro-russian-group/</a>

GIST	<p>Romania's national cybersecurity response team and intelligence agency said several websites connected to government agencies and a bank were hit with distributed denial-of-service attacks on Friday.</p> <p>The National Directorate of Cyber Security (DNSC) <a href="#">said</a> in a statement that the websites for Romania's government, ministry of defense, border police, national railway company were attacked by a group called "Killnet." The website for OTP Bank was also attacked.</p> <p>Both the DNSC and the Romanian Intelligence Service's CYBERINT National Center said the Killnet group claimed credit for the incident on Telegram and said it launched the attack because Romania has supported Ukraine since Russia invaded the country earlier this year.</p> <p>The Romanian Intelligence Service <a href="#">explained</a> that the sites were down for several hours after the attacks began around 4 am local time.</p> <p>"Following the investigations carried out by the CYBERINT National Center within the Romanian Intelligence Service, it was established that the cyberattackers used network equipment from outside Romania," the Romanian Intelligence Service said in a statement.</p> <p>"The attackers took control of the equipment in question by exploiting cybersecurity vulnerabilities [and] the lack of cybersecurity measures and used them as a vector of attack on sites in Romania."</p> <p>The agency added that Killnet specializes in DDoS attacks and has previously attacked sites connected to the governments of the U.S., Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic and other NATO members.</p> <p>The DNSC said it plans to publish the list of IP addresses identified as being involved in the attack as both agencies work with the affected institutions to resolve issues caused by the attack.</p> <p>The attack came just one day after leading Romanian politician Marcel Ciolacu said the country <a href="#">may deliver weapons and provide military assistance</a> to Ukraine.</p> <p>This week, Microsoft vice president Tom Burt <a href="#">said</a> the company's experts believe cyberattacks will continue to escalate as the war between Russia and Ukraine continues.</p> <p>"Russian nation-state threat actors may be tasked to expand their destructive actions outside of Ukraine to retaliate against those countries that decide to provide more military assistance to Ukraine and take more punitive measures against the Russian government in response to the continued aggression," Burt said.</p> <p>"We've observed Russian-aligned actors active in Ukraine show interest in or conduct operations against organizations in the Baltics and Turkey – all NATO member states actively providing political, humanitarian or military support to Ukraine."</p> <p>Last month, Romania's largest oil refinery proprietor, Rompetrol, <a href="#">was attacked</a> by the Hive ransomware group.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Russia cyber case prompted FBI queries</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/fbi-searched-foreign-intel-database-3-3-million-times-last-year/">https://therecord.media/fbi-searched-foreign-intel-database-3-3-million-times-last-year/</a>
GIST	<p>Russian cyberthreat against U.S. critical infrastructure in the first half of 2021 prompted the FBI to query the database of a warrantless surveillance program nearly 2 million times as the bureau cast a wide net for useful information, officials said Friday.</p> <p>That single national security threat alone accounted for more than half of the total number of the roughly 3.4 million searches the FBI made in 2021 using terms likely to identify an American citizen, the officials said. The repository captures information from electronic surveillance tools authorized under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.</p>

The FBI did not specify whether the danger was posed by the Russian government or a criminal group. The database queries were aimed at protecting Americans, a senior FBI official told reporters during the presentation of an [annual transparency report on U.S. spying authorities](#).

“More specifically on this threat, we identified a pool of potential victims, which did include U.S. persons, and we ran that against our 702 collection in order to identify who, in particular, Russia was actually targeting,” the senior official said, noting the requests were reviewed by the Justice Department and found compliant with existing statute.

The first half of 2021 was dominated by massive ransomware attacks, including on [the Colonial Pipeline company](#), [software firm Kaseya](#) and [food processing giant JBS](#). Some of those cases have now been [attributed to Russian hackers](#).

The FBI official also could not say if the total number of queries in the cyberthreat case — about 1.9 million — is comparable to past investigations.

This year marks the first time the bureau has publicly provided the number of searches since the Office of the Director of National Intelligence began recording surveillance-related statistics in 2013. That move came after the leaks by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden sparked a national debate over electronic eavesdropping.

The new ODNI report shows the FBI conducted about 1.3 million queries in 2020.

“The number this year, and the number last year, is certainly a large number. I am not going to pretend that it isn’t,” the bureau official said.

Even though the overall figure represents the total number of searches — and not the amount of unique terms used to uncover data or a number of American citizens — Friday’s disclosure will likely complicate the Biden administration’s push to renew [Section 702](#), which is due to expire at the end of 2023.

[The Record first reported](#) that the U.S. intelligence community has begun preparing for next year’s debate over the spying tools, which allow the federal government to collect emails and other electronic communications of foreign intelligence targets but also incidentally Hoover up the personal data of Americans, especially if they were communicating with a foreigner abroad who was targeted under the Section 702 rules.

FBI officials provided several caveats to the seven-digit figure, noting that the bureau’s work only applied to about 4.4 percent of the targets in the database, and that all database searches must, by law, be relevant to an open investigation. The ODNI report shows the database had 232,432 such targets overall last year, up from 202,723 the previous year.

However, such complex and nuanced arguments could fall on deaf ears on Capitol Hill.

Congressional reauthorization of surveillance programs is no longer a foregone conclusion after former President Donald Trump and his allies spent years making baseless accusations that his 2016 campaign was spied on. The rhetoric, combined with existing concerns from privacy-minded Democrats and civil libertarian-oriented Republicans, directly led to lawmakers declining to renew another part of FISA in 2020.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a longtime privacy hawk, decried the report.

“For anyone outside the U.S. government, the astronomical number of FBI searches of Americans’ communications is either highly alarming or entirely meaningless,” [Wyden said in a statement](#).



“Somewhere in all that over-counting are real numbers of FBI searches, for content and for noncontent — numbers that Congress and the American people need before Section 702 is reauthorized,” added Wyden, who serves on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The FBI must “be transparent about the particular circumstances in which it conducted a staggering 1.9 million additional queries in 2021 ... Baseline transparency is essential if the federal government wants to hold such sweeping surveillance powers.”

Speaking at the Hewlett Foundation Verify 2022 conference in Saulsalito, California, Assistant Attorney General Matt Olsen didn’t rule out declassifying more information about the particular case as DOJ works with lawmakers to renew 702.

“We’re looking at all these things,” he told *The Record*. “We need to have more information out there to justify that we need more authorities.”

FBI officials stood by their decision to publicly release the number of searches for the first time.

“A different direction we could have gone is to say: ‘This number is too fuzzy. We’re just going to hold it,’” a second bureau official told reporters. “We didn’t think that was the right answer. We thought it was the right answer to give people the information with its fuzziness with its complexity, and allow them to make their own determinations about it instead of us making that decision for them.”

The transparency report “is in fact about transparency,” according to Ben Huebner, chief of the civil liberties, privacy and transparency office at ODNI. “We take some pride in the fact that while surveillance authorities are inherently something that we as the American public debate, even though these are classified operations.”

That debate “has been, in recent years and continues to be, based in fact. Based in reality,” he added. “We’re all sort of having the good arguments we have as a civil society operating on this in the same factual universe. And so, this is an effort to continue that right. We thought the most important thing was for folks to understand how the FBI was using this authority.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Cyberespionage APT is 3 subgroups</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://threatpost.com/apt-id-3-separate-actors/179435/">https://threatpost.com/apt-id-3-separate-actors/179435/</a>
GIST	<p>The threat group known as TA410 that wields the sophisticated FlowCloud RAT actually has three subgroups operating globally, each with their own toolsets and targets.</p> <p>A threat group responsible for sophisticated cyberespionage attacks against U.S. utilities is actually comprised of three subgroups, all with their own toolsets and targets, that have been operating globally since 2018, researchers have found.</p> <p>TA410 is a cyberespionage umbrella group loosely linked to <a href="#">APT10</a>, a group tied to China’s Ministry of State Security. The group is known not only for targeting U.S. organizations in the utilities sector, but also diplomatic organizations in the Middle East and Africa, according to <a href="#">a report</a> published this week by researchers at security firm ESET.</p> <p>Though it’s apparently been active since 2018, TA410 first came up on researchers’ radar in 2019, when <a href="#">Proofpoint uncovered</a> a phishing campaign targeting three U.S. companies in the utilities sector that used a novel malware then dubbed LookBack.</p> <p>About a year later, the threat group <a href="#">resurfaced</a> by deploying a sophisticated RAT against Windows targets in the United States’ utilities sector. Dubbed FlowCloud and believed to be the evolution of Lookback, the RAT can access installed applications and control the keyboard, mouse, screen, files, services and processes of an infected computer. The tool also can exfiltrate information to a command-and-control (C2) provider.</p>



Now ESET researchers have found that TA410 is not one but actually three subgroups of threat actors—FlowingFrog, LookingFrog and JollyFrog—each “using very similar tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) but different toolsets and exiting from IP addresses located in three different districts,” researchers Alexandre Côté Cyr and Matthieu Faou wrote in the report.

The teams have overlaps in TTPs, victimology and network infrastructure, and they compromise global targets—primarily government or education organizations—in various ways, indicating that victims are targeted specifically, “with the attackers choosing which entry method has the best chance of infiltrating the target,” researchers said.

Those ways include a new version of FlowCloud as well as access to the most recently known Microsoft Exchange remote code execution vulnerabilities, ProxyLogon and ProxyShell, among other tools—both custom and generic—that are specific to each group, researchers found.

### **FlowingFrog**

Researchers analyzed the activity of each subgroup, including which tools they use and what type of victims they target. They also identified overlap in which the actors work together.

Flowing Frog shares network infrastructure—specifically, the domain ffca.caibi379[.]com—with JollyFrog. It also ran the phishing campaign uncovered by Proofpoint in 2019 together with LookingFrog, researchers said.

The subgroup has its own specific mode of attack and has launched campaigns against specific targets—namely universities, the foreign diplomatic mission of a South Asian country in China and a mining company in India, researchers found.

FlowingFrog uses a first stage that ESET researchers have named the Tendyron downloader, and then FlowCloud as a second stage they said.

“Tendyron.exe is a legitimate executable, signed by online-banking security vendor Tendyron Corporation, and that is vulnerable to DLL search-order hijacking,” researchers explained.

FlowingFrog also uses Royal Road, a malicious document builder used by several cyberespionage groups that builds RTF documents exploiting Equation Editor N-day vulnerabilities such as [CVE-2017-11882](#), researchers said.

### **LookingFrog**

LookingFrog typically targets diplomatic missions, charity organizations and entities in government and industrial manufacturing using two main malware families: X4 and LookBack.

X4 is a custom backdoor that is used as a first stage before LookBack is deployed researchers explained. The backdoor is loaded by a VMProtect-ed loader, usually named PortableDeviceApi.dll or WptsExtensions.dll.

LookBack is a RAT written in C++ that relies on a proxy communication tool to relay data from the infected host to the command-and-control server (C2). The malware has capabilities to view process, system and file data; delete files; take screenshots; move and click the infected system’s mouse; reboot machines; and delete itself from an infected host.

LookBack is comprised of several components, including a C2 proxy tool, a malware loader, a communications module to create the C2 channel with the GUP proxy tool, and a RAT component to decode the initial beacon response received from the GUP proxy tool.

### **JollyFrog**

The third and final team of TA410, JollyFrog, targets organizations in education, religion, and the military as well as those with diplomatic missions, researchers found. Rather than use custom tools, the group exclusively uses generic, off-the-shelf malware from known families QuasarRAT and Korplug, aka PlugX. Quasar RAT is a full-featured backdoor freely available on [GitHub](#) and is a popular tool used by cyberespionage and cybercrime threat actors, researchers said. It's been previously used in a [phishing campaign](#) targeting companies with fake job-seeker Microsoft Word resumes and [a 2019 APT10 malicious cyber campaign](#) against government and private organizations in Southeast Asia.

Korplug is a backdoor that that also has been used for years by various cyberespionage groups and remains a popular tool. Last month, China's Mustang Panda/TA416/RedDelta used Korplug [in an espionage campaign](#) against diplomatic missions, research entities and internet service providers (ISPs) in and around Southeast Asia.

TA410 typically deploys Korplug as a RARSFX archive, generally named m.exe and containing three files: qrt.dll, a custom loader; qrtfix.exe, a legitimate signed application from F-Secure, vulnerable to DLL search-order hijacking; and qrt.dll.usb: the Korplug shellcode.

"The loader allocates memory using VirtualAlloc and copies the content of qrt.dll.usb there," researchers explained. "Then it jumps right into the shellcode that will decompress and load the Korplug payload."

#### **Updated Version of FlowCloud**

ESET researchers also took a look under the hood of an updated version of FlowCloud currently being used by TA410.

FlowCloud is a complex implant written in C++ comprised of three main components—a rootkit functionality, a simple persistence module and a custom backdoor—deployed in a multistage process that uses various obfuscation and encryption techniques to hinder analysis.

While Proofpoint researchers previously analyzed FlowCloud versions 4.1.3 and 5.0.1, TA410 is now using FlowCloud versions 5.0.2 and 5.0.3, which have new capabilities, they said.

"Contrary to those previously found, the samples we obtained for version 5.0.2 contain verbose error messages and meticulous logging," researchers explained.

The new version of the tool now also can perform the following activities:

- Controlling connected microphones and triggering recording when sound levels above a specified threshold volume are detected;
- Monitoring clipboard events to steal clipboard content;
- Monitoring file system events to collect new and modified files; and
- Controlling attached camera devices to take pictures of the compromised computer's surroundings.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Finnish hotels' data compromised</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/finnish-hotels-data-compromised/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/finnish-hotels-data-compromised/</a>
GIST	<p>A cyber-attack on a hotel reservation system has exposed the personal data of thousands of guests who stayed at upscale Finnish hotels.</p> <p>News of the security incident, which has impacted at least five hotels, was first reported by Finnish news agency MTV on Tuesday.</p> <p>Between February 10 and 14, cyber-attackers exploited a vulnerability to hack into the company's computer system that supplies the booking system to multiple hotels across Finland. After the hack was discovered on April 9, the vulnerability was patched.</p>

[Nordic Hotels & Resorts](#) disclosed that the personal data of 15,497 of its customers had been compromised owing to the attack on the booking system used by two of its Helsinki-based hotels – the boutique F6 Hotel and the grand and luxurious Hotelli Kämp.

The breach [reportedly](#) affected only those guests who booked directly through the hotels' websites.

"The booking system for one of our suppliers' websites was compromised. The attack affected two of our hotels," [said](#) Jonathan Blom, communication advisor at Nordic Hotels & Resorts.

He added: "We try to work closely with our suppliers and our IT support team to prevent things like this from happening, but unfortunately there are criminals who commit crimes to gain access to information."

Blom said on Tuesday that several other hotels in Finland had been affected by the cyber-attack. The incident has been reported to the Finnish police and the country's data protection commissioner.

On Wednesday, MTV [reported](#) that the data breach occurred when an international reservation system operated by American travel technology company [Sabre Corporation](#) was hacked.

The news agency reported that three additional hotels in Finland had been affected by the data breach. The number of guests whose personal data was compromised has now reportedly risen to at least 20,000.

"The reporter of the program office has announced that the case also concerns three other hotels in Finland," Helsinki Police criminal inspector Jukkapekka Risu told MTV.

Information compromised in the hack includes hotel guests' names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and the dates of their reservations. The data breach is not believed to have exposed any sensitive identity documents or financial payment card information.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Breastcancer.org suffers massive data loss</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/breast-cancer-charity-exposed-sensitive-images-patients/">https://www.hackread.com/breast-cancer-charity-exposed-sensitive-images-patients/</a>
GIST	<p>The Ardmore, Pennsylvania-based cancer charity Breastcancer.org suffered a massive data loss impacting thousands of its registered users.</p> <p>The IT security researchers at SafetyDetectives identified a <a href="#">misconfigured Amazon S3 bucket</a> that was left publicly available without any safety protocols in place. Further probe revealed Breascancer.org, a US-based charity, owned the bucket.</p> <p>The bucket was identified on 11 November 2021, and the files stored dated back to April 2017, while filenames suggested some images dated back to 2014 and 2017.</p> <p>SafetyDetectives informed Breastcancer.org about the exposed bucket on 17 November 2021 and again on 21 November 2021. Later, the US Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) was notified about the misconfigured bucket.</p> <p>The unfortunate incident resulted in the exposure of thousands of files to the public, including sensitive images of the charity's website users. It is worth noting that Amazon doesn't manage this bucket, and therefore, the misconfiguration isn't Amazon's fault.</p> <p>It shouldn't come as a surprise since misconfigured databases is a big problem for businesses. Earlier this week, Group-IB researchers <a href="#">published their findings</a> revealing that they discovered 308,000 exposed databases across the globe.</p> <p><b>About Breastcancer.org</b></p>

Breastcancer.org is a non-profit organization established in 2000 to offer the most advanced, scientifically-backed research on breast cancer and offer free breast health advisory via its website to empower women.

The Ardmore, Pennsylvania-based organization's website receives more than 28 million visitors annually and boasts 220,000 registered members. Given the company's global reach, it is evident that the data exposure must impact a significant number of users in the USA and Europe.

#### **Details of Exposed Data**

The bucket exposed more than 350,000 files, containing around 150 GB of data. There were reportedly two datasets on the exposed bucket: User Avatars and Post Images.

According to a [blog post](#) published by researchers, user Avatars contained profile pictures of the charity's registered users. There were approximately 50,000 user avatars in the exposed dataset, and most of them feature images of the users. Furthermore, Post Images were also uploaded by Breastcancer.org's users. The bucket contained more than 300,000 post images.

#### **Sensitive Data Also Exposed**

A portion of data contained sensitive user images, including detailed EXIF data that can reveal device details such as the camera model and brand and the image's GPS location. This information may allow malicious threat actors to identify users' locations and harass them.

Some post images also featured sensitive images intended for private viewing. Such as, there were medical test results, ultrasound results, and nude images taken for medical use. This type of content a user wouldn't like to make public. Another alarming fact was that the open bucket was live and updated when it was discovered.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Russia hackers target embassy emails</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-compromise-embassy-emails-to-target-governments/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-compromise-embassy-emails-to-target-governments/</a>
GIST	<p>Security analysts have uncovered a recent phishing campaign from Russian hackers known as APT29 (Cozy Bear or Nobelium) targeting diplomats and government entities.</p> <p>The APT29 is a <a href="#">state-sponsored actor</a> that focuses on cyberespionage and has been active since at least 2014. Its targeting scope is determined by current Russian geopolitical strategic interests.</p> <p>In a new campaign spotted by threat analysts at Mandiant, APT29 is targeting diplomats and various government agencies through multiple phishing campaigns.</p> <p>The messages pretend to carry important policy updates and originate from legitimate email addresses belonging to embassies.</p> <p>Another notable aspect in this campaign is the abuse of Atlassian Trello, and other legitimate cloud service platforms, for command and control (C2) communication.</p> <p><b>Phishing campaign details</b></p> <p>The spear-phishing campaign started in January 2022 and continued through March 2022 in several waves that rotated to various topics and relied on multiple sender addresses.</p> <p>In all cases, the phishing emails originated from a legitimate compromised email address belonging to a diplomat, so recipients would be more trusting in the content delivered this way.</p> <p>Mandiant found that the initially compromised addresses were listed as contact points on embassy websites.</p>

The email used the [HTML smuggling](#) technique to deliver an IMG or ISO file to the recipient, a technique that APT29 has used numerous times in the past with great success, including in the SolarWinds attacks.

The ISO archive contains a Windows shortcut file (LNK) that executed an embedded malicious DLL file when clicked.

To trick the victim into clicking, the LNK file pretends to be a document file with the real extension hidden and a fake icon.

### Malware drop

The DLL execution results in the delivery of the BEATDROP downloader, which runs in memory after creating a suspended thread to inject itself into, and connects to Trello for C2 communication.

Trello is widely used in corporate environments, so using its API for malicious network traffic is unlikely to raise any critical flags from security products.

In later efforts, APT29 replaced BEATDROP with a new C++ BEACON loader based on Cobalt Strike that features higher-level capabilities.

These capabilities include keylogging, taking screenshot, a proxy server mode, account credentials exfiltration, enumeration, and port scanning.

Both loaders deployed BOOMIC, which Microsoft tracks as VaporRage, discovered and [analyzed in May 2021](#). In many cases, BOOMIC was side-loaded mere minutes after the loader was deployed.

BOOMIC establishes persistence by modifying the Windows registry and then downloads various obfuscated shellcode payloads and runs them in memory.

Mandiant observed various legitimate compromised websites serving as BOOMIC's C2, which helps avoid URL blocklisting problems.

### Lateral movement

After establishing a presence in an environment, APT29 escalates privileges in less than 12 hours, using various methods like writing files that contain Kerberos tickets.

Next, they perform extensive network reconnaissance to identify valid pivoting points and snatch more valuable passwords, and finally, move laterally by dropping more Cobalt Strike beacons and then BOOMIC on adjacent systems.

“Analysis of SharedReality.dll identified it to be a memory-only dropper written in Go language that decrypts and executes an embedded BEACON payload. The BEACON payload was identified to be SMB BEACON that communicates over the SharedReality.dll Named Pipe,” [Mandiant says](#).

“APT29 was then observed utilizing the impersonation of a privileged user to copy SharedReality.dll to the Temp directory of multiple systems. The group then deployed it via a scheduled task named SharedRealitySvcDLC, which was installed and executed. After executing the scheduled task, the task was then immediately deleted” – Mandiant

No matter the persistent and tight tracking of APT29 by competent threat intelligence teams, the group remains a top-level espionage threat for high-interest targets.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 REvil ransomware returns
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/revil-ransomware-returns-new-malware-sample-confirms-gang-is-back/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/revil-ransomware-returns-new-malware-sample-confirms-gang-is-back/</a>

The notorious REvil ransomware operation has returned amidst rising tensions between Russia and the USA, with new infrastructure and a modified encryptor allowing for more targeted attacks.

In October, the [REvil ransomware gang shut down](#) after a law enforcement operation hijacked their Tor servers, followed by [arrests of members by Russian law enforcement](#).

However, after the invasion of Ukraine, [Russia stated](#) that the US had withdrawn from the negotiation process regarding the REvil gang and closed communications channels.

### **REvil's Tor sites come back to life**

Soon after, the old REvil Tor infrastructure [began operating again](#), but instead of showing the old websites, they redirected visitors to URLs for a new unnamed ransomware operation.

While these sites looked nothing like REvil's previous websites, the fact that the old infrastructure was redirecting to the new sites indicated that REvil was likely operating again. Furthermore, these new sites contained a mix of new victims and data stolen during previous REvil attacks.

While these events strongly indicated that REvil rebranded as the new unnamed operation, the Tor sites had also previously displayed a message in November stating that "REvil is bad."

This access to the Tor sites meant that other threat actors or law enforcement had access to REvil's TOR sites, so the websites themselves were not strong enough proof of the gang's return.

The only way to know for sure whether REvil was back was to find a sample of the ransomware encryptor and analyze it to determine if it was patched or compiled from source code.

A sample of the new ransomware operation's encryptor was [finally discovered](#) this week by AVAST research [Jakub Kroustek](#) and has confirmed the new operation's ties to REvil.

### **Ransomware sample confirms return**

While a few ransomware operations are using REvil's encryptor, they all use patched executables rather than having direct access to the gang's source code.

However, BleepingComputer has been told by multiple security researchers and malware analysts that the discovered REvil sample used by the new operation is compiled from source code and includes new changes.

Security researcher [R3MRUM](#) has [tweeted](#) that the REvil sample has had its version number changed to 1.0 but is a continuation of the last version, 2.08, released by REvil before they shut down.

### **Version change in new REvil encryptor**

In discussion with BleepingComputer, the researcher said he could not explain why the encryptor doesn't encrypt files but believes it was compiled from source code.

"Yes, my assessment is that the threat actor has the source code. Not patched like "LV Ransomware" did," R3MRUM told BleepingComputer.

Advanced Intel CEO [Vitali Kremez](#) also reverse-engineered the REvil sample this weekend and has confirmed to BleepingComputer that it was compiled from source code on April 26th and was not patched.

Kremez told BleepingComputer that the new REvil sample includes a new configuration field, 'accs,' which contains credentials for the specific victim that the attack is targeting.

Kremez believes that the 'accs' configuration option is used to prevent encryption on other devices that do not contain the specified accounts and Windows domains, allowing for highly targeted attacks.



In addition to the 'accs' option, the new REvil sample's [configuration](#) has modified SUB and PID options, used as campaign and affiliate identifiers, to use longer GUID-type values, such as '3c852cc8-b7f1-436e-ba3b-c53b7fc6c0e4.'

BleepingComputer also tested the ransomware sample, and while it did not encrypt, it did create the ransom note, which is identical to REvil's old ransom notes.

Furthermore, while there are some differences between the old REvil sites and the rebranded operation, once a victim logs into the site, it is almost identical to the originals, and the threat actors claim to be 'Sodinokibi,'....

While the original public-facing REvil representative known as '[Unknown](#)' is still missing, threat intelligence researcher [FellowSecurity](#) told BleepingComputer that one of REvil's original core developers, who was part of the old team, relaunched the ransomware operation.

As this was a core developer, it would make sense that they also had access to the complete REvil source code and potentially the Tor private keys for the old sites.

It's not surprising that REvil has rebranded under the new operation, especially with the declining relations between USA and Russia.

However, when ransomware operations rebrand, they typically do it to evade law enforcement or sanctions preventing the payment of ransoms.

Therefore, it is unusual for REvil to be so public about their return, rather than trying to evade detection like we have seen in so many other ransomware rebrands.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Fake Windows 10 updates</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-windows-10-updates-infect-you-with-magniber-ransomware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-windows-10-updates-infect-you-with-magniber-ransomware/</a>
GIST	<p>Fake Windows 10 updates are being used to distribute the Magniber ransomware in a massive campaign that started earlier this month.</p> <p>Over the past few days, BleepingComputer has received a surge of requests for help regarding a ransomware infection targeting users worldwide.</p> <p>While researching the campaign, we discovered a <a href="#">topic in our forums</a> where readers report becoming infected by the Magniber ransomware after installing what is believed to be Windows 10 cumulative or security update.</p> <p>These updates are distributed under various names, with Win10.0_System_Upgrade_Software.msi [<a href="#">VirusTotal</a>] and Security_Upgrade_Software_Win10.0.msi being the most common.</p> <p>Other downloads pretend to be Windows 10 cumulative updates, using fake knowledge base articles, as shown below.</p> <p>System.Upgrade.Win10.0-KB47287134.msi System.Upgrade.Win10.0-KB82260712.msi System.Upgrade.Win10.0-KB18062410.msi System.Upgrade.Win10.0-KB66846525.msi</p> <p>Based on the submissions to VirusTotal, this campaign appears to have started on April 8th, 2022 and has seen massive distribution worldwide since then.</p>

	<p>While it's not 100% clear how the fake Windows 10 updates are being promoted, the downloads are distributed from fake warez and crack sites.</p> <p>The ransomware also creates ransom notes named <b>README.html</b> in each folder that contains instructions on how to access the Magniber Tor payment site to pay a ransom.</p> <p>The Magniber payment site is titled 'My Decryptor' and will allow a victim to decrypt one file for free, contact 'support,' or determine the ransom amount and bitcoin address victims should make a payment.</p> <p>From payment pages seen by BleepingComputer, most ransom demands have been approximately \$2,500 or 0.068 bitcoins.</p> <p>Magniber is considered secure, meaning that it does not contain any weaknesses that can be exploited to recover files for free.</p> <p>Unfortunately, this campaign primarily targets students and consumers rather than enterprise victims, causing the ransom demand to be too expensive for many victims.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Google fights doxing: new PII policy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/google/google-fights-doxing-with-updated-personal-info-removal-policy/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/google/google-fights-doxing-with-updated-personal-info-removal-policy/</a>
GIST	<p>Google has expanded its policies to allow doxing victims to remove more of their personally identifiable information (PII) from search engine results starting earlier this week.</p> <p>Removing doxing content (contact info shared online with malicious intent) aims to protect the victims' privacy and substantial risks of identity theft, financial fraud, and, in some cases, the potential of physical harm.</p> <p>While people already had the option to request the removal of personal data that could be used in financial fraud, such as credit card and bank account info, before this update, Google now also allows demands to delete contact information.</p> <p>"Under this new policy expansion, people can now request removals of additional types of information when they find it in Search results, including personal contact information like a phone number, email address, or physical address," said Michelle Chang, Google's Global Policy Lead for Search.</p> <p>"The policy also allows for the removal of additional information that may pose a risk for identity theft, such as confidential log-in credentials, when it appears in Search results."</p> <p>In all, the company says it will allow the removal of the following types of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential government identification (ID) numbers</li> <li>• Bank account numbers</li> <li>• Credit card numbers</li> <li>• Images of handwritten signatures</li> <li>• Images of ID docs</li> <li>• Highly personal, restricted, and official records, like medical records</li> <li>• Personal contact info (physical addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses)</li> <li>• Confidential login credentials</li> </ul> <p>However, for this to happen, Google adds that it <a href="#">requires</a> URLs submitted via content removal requests to contain your contact info.</p> <p>Also, Google will only consider the requests if it finds the presence of "explicit or implicit threats, or explicit or implicit calls to action for others to harm or harass."</p>

	<p>Victims of doxxing or their authorized representatives can submit requests to remove personal information from Google search results via <a href="#">this link</a>.</p> <p>Once it goes through, you will get an automated confirmation and a notification of any action taken or a request for more info if there's not enough information to evaluate the removal request.</p> <p>You can find more info about the process, including the factors considered in each request's evaluation and which URLs you need to submit for review, on this <a href="#">help page</a>.</p> <p>"The availability of personal contact information online can be jarring — and it can be used in harmful ways, including for unwanted direct contact or even physical harm," Chang <a href="#">added</a>.</p> <p>"And people have given us feedback that they would like the ability to remove this type of information from Search in some cases."</p> <p>In October, Google also rolled out a new policy allowing people under the age of 18 (or one of their parents or guardians) to request the removal of links in Google Search results pointing to sites hosting their photos.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Scammers disguised as fraud busters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://blog.malwarebytes.com/scams/2022/04/beware-scammers-disguised-as-fraud-busters/?web_view=true">https://blog.malwarebytes.com/scams/2022/04/beware-scammers-disguised-as-fraud-busters/?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Fraudsters like confusing and disorienting people. Successful ones avoid obvious lines of approach and try things you wouldn't expect. A recent story highlights this, with a particularly devious method of parting someone from their money.</p> <p>The Daily Record <a href="#">reports</a> scammers running off with an \$11,000 haul from a lady in Scotland. They did this by subverting expectations and drawing attention to a theft that never happened.</p> <p><b>Distraction and subterfuge</b>  Impersonation fraud is a huge problem. It weaves into several forms of cybercrime, such as <a href="#">phishing</a>, <a href="#">fake customer support agents</a>, fake deliveries, and even <a href="#">bogus charity donations</a>.</p> <p>One of the most interesting choices fraudsters make is to run a scam that specifically draws the victim's attention to fraudulent activity, real or otherwise. It sounds counter-productive, but it's the last thing people would expect.</p> <p>Someone calling and claiming to be your bank will raise multiple red flags, even before asking for banking details. Getting a call from someone saying they blocked a potential thief from stealing your savings? That will set many people at ease, which fraudsters are hoping for.</p> <p><b>Borrowing from the tech support scam playbook</b>  A scam such as this usually follows a pattern. The attacker:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Calls, claiming to have spotted an attempted fraud or stopped an unauthorized transaction.</li> <li>2. Asks if you can help with inquiries related to the non-existent attack.</li> <li>3. Requests banking information.</li> </ol> <p>The attack against the Scots lady splits off from this pattern somewhat, incorporating tactics more commonly seen in tech support scams. Instead of asking for banking information, the attacker says they can help prevent future fraud attempts and advises the target to download Any Desk, a legitimate app that acts as a remote access tool to someone's phone.</p> <p>The end result is that the attacker used their access to steal a significant chunk of the victim's life savings. Inspector Laura Hamill, a member of the Paisley community policing team, told the Daily Record that the</p>

victim "...was left understandably distressed after having a large sum of cash stolen from her account through the use of an app which she was convinced to download to her device."

### How to deal with fraud support

Banks tend to have strict rules about how their fraud team calls operate. Here are some things you can look out for when deciding if a call is genuine or not.

- If fraud is detected, banks will try outreach after putting a hold on your card. There may be automated calls, texts, or voicemails. These usually ask you to call a dedicated number on the bank's website.
- Regardless of the outreach method, the bank never asks you for full passwords, PINS, security codes, passwords, or anything displayed on authenticator devices.
- Banks don't send fraud warnings via email. If you receive one, with or without a clickable link, don't reply. Call your bank.
- Your bank may have its own banking app for online mobile banking. They will never ask you to download remote access tools.
- If you doubt the correct bank contact numbers, your bank should at least have a helpline number printed on the back of your card.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Anonymous hacks Russia energy sector</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/130726/cyber-warfare-2/anonymous-hack-russian-companies.html?web_view=true">https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/130726/cyber-warfare-2/anonymous-hack-russian-companies.html?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p><b>OpRussia continues, less than a week after my last update Anonymous has hacked other Russian companies and leaked their data via DDoSecrets.</b></p> <p>The #OpRussia launched by Anonymous on Russia after the criminal invasion of Ukraine continues, the collective claims to have published more than 6 TB of Russian data via DDoSecrets. This is my update on the recent attack and associated data leaks via the DDoSecrets platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Elektrocentromontazh</a> is the largest the chief power organization of Russia, it designs, tests, builds, installs and maintains electrical equipment in power generation and transmission facilities in over 25 regions of Russia. ECM's domestic <a href="#">clients include</a> the Novovoronezh, Kursk and Smolensk nuclear power plants, Russian Railways JSC, State enterprise Moscow Power Directorate, the Energy department of Moscow Government, the Moscow united electric grid JSC branch, and Baltic Oil Pipelines LLC. The collective has released a 1.7 TB archive via DDoSecrets that contains 1.23 millions emails from the company.</li><li>• <a href="#">PSCB Petersburg Social Commercial Bank</a> is one of the top 100 Russian banks in terms of net assets. The financial institution was hacked by Anonymous's affiliate Network Battalion 65, one of the most active hacking groups since the beginning of the invasion. The collective has released a 542 GB archive via DDoSecrets that contains 229,000 emails and 630,000 files from the <a href="#">Petersburg Social Commercial Bank</a>.</li><li>• <a href="#">ALET</a> is a customs broker for companies in the fuel and energy industries, handling exports and customs declarations for coal, crude oil, liquefied gases and petroleum products. ALET has worked with over 400 companies since 2011 to file over 119,000 customs declarations and has recommendations from Gazprom, Gazprom Neft and Bashneft. Approximately 75% of ALET's business comes from oil products, 10% from oil, and 9% from hydrocarbon products. The collective has released a 1.1 TB archive via DDoSecrets that contains nearly 1.1 million emails from ALET / AJIET.</li></ul>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Update iOS, Android, Chrome right now</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/ios-android-chrome-updates-april-2022/">https://www.wired.com/story/ios-android-chrome-updates-april-2022/</a>
GIST	<b>APRIL HAS BEEN</b> a big month for security updates, including emergency patches for Apple's iOS and Google Chrome to fix vulnerabilities already being used by attackers.

Microsoft has released important fixes as part of its mid-April Patch Tuesday, while Android users across multiple devices need to make sure they are applying the latest update when it becomes available.

Here are all the April updates you need to know about.

### **Apple iOS and iPadOS 15.4.1, macOS 12.3.1**

Just two weeks after the launch of iOS 15.4, Apple issued iOS and iPad 15.4.1 to fix a vulnerability in [AppleAVD](#) that's already being used to attack iPhones. By exploiting the vulnerability, labeled CVE-2022-22675, adversaries could execute arbitrary code with kernel privileges via an app, according to Apple's [support](#) page. This could give an attacker full control over your device, so it's important to apply the fix.

As an added bonus, iOS and iPadOS 15.4.1 fixes a battery drain issue affecting some iPhones on iOS 15.4. The updates are available for iPhone 6s and later, iPad Pro, iPad Air 2 and later, iPad 5th generation and later, iPad mini 4 and later, and iPod touch 7th generation.

Meanwhile, [macOS Monterey 12.3.1](#) fixes the same issue in macOS, as well as another vulnerability in the Intel graphics driver, CVE-2022-22674, which could allow an app to read kernel memory. It's another important fix—Apple says the issue may have been exploited by attackers.

Apple also released tvOS 15.4.1 and watchOS 8.5.1 including bug fixes.

Apple updates have been coming thick and fast over the past year, with the iPhone maker fixing a number of significant vulnerabilities, including the [zero-click](#) issue exploited by the [Pegasus spyware](#), the highly targeted malware developed by Israeli firm NSO Group. This was the subject of a recent report by security researchers at Citizen Lab, who have [detailed](#) how Pegasus and other similar zero-click attacks targeted members of the European Parliament, legislators, political activists, and civil society organizations.

A zero-click attack is particularly scary because, as the name implies, it requires no interaction to work. That means an image sent via iMessage could infect your iPhone with spyware.

Citizen Lab detailed a previously undisclosed iOS zero-click vulnerability called HOMAGE used by NSO Group. Some iOS versions prior to iOS 13.2 could be at risk, making it all the more important your iPhone is up to date.

### **Android's April 2022 Patches**

Android users also need to be on alert, as Google has patched 44 flaws in its mobile operating system this month. According to Google's [Android Security Bulletin](#), the most severe issue in the framework component could allow local privilege escalation without any interaction from the user.

The update is split into two parts: the 2022-04-01 security patch level for most Android devices, and the 2022-04-05 security patch level applying to specific phones and tablets. The later of the two fixes 30 issues in system and kernel components, among other areas. There are also patches for five security issues specific to Google's [Pixel smartphones](#), one of which could allow an app to [escalate privileges](#) and execute code on certain versions of Linux.

To find the update, you'll need to check your device settings. Devices that have received the Android April update so far [include](#) Google's Pixel devices and some third-party Android phones, including the Samsung Galaxy A32 5G, A51, A52 5G, A53 5G, A71, S10 series, S20 series, Note20 series, Z Flip 5G, Z Flip3, Z Fold, Z Fold2, and the Z Fold3, as well as the OnePlus 9 and OnePlus 9 Pro.

### **Google Chrome Emergency Updates**

As the world's biggest browser with [over 3 billion](#) users, it's no surprise attackers are targeting Google Chrome. Browser-based attacks are particularly worrying because they can potentially be chained together with other vulnerabilities and used to take over your device.

It has been a particularly busy month for the team behind Google's Chrome browser, which has seen several security updates within weeks of each other. The [latest](#), pushed out in mid-April, [fixes](#) two issues including a high-severity zero-day vulnerability, CVE-2022-1364, which is already being used by attackers.

The technical details aren't currently available, but the timing of the fix—just a day after it was reported—indicates it's pretty serious. If you use Chrome, your browser should now be on version 100.0.4896.127 to include the fix. You'll need to restart Chrome after the update has installed to ensure it activates.

The Chrome issue also impacts other Chromium-based browsers, including Brave, Microsoft Edge, Opera, and Vivaldi, so if you use one of those, make sure you apply the patch.

But that's not all. On April 27, Google [announced](#) another Chrome update, fixing 30 security vulnerabilities. None of these have been exploited yet, the company says, but seven are rated as being a high risk. The update takes the browser to version 101.0.4951.41.

### Oracle's April 2022 Critical Patch Update

In mid-April, Oracle released its quarterly [Critical Patch Update](#), including a whopping 520 security fixes. Some of the issues fixed in the update are serious—300 of them can be exploited remotely without authentication, and 75 security issues are rated as critical severity. Some of the Oracle patches address CVE-2022-22965, aka [Spring4Shell](#), a remote code execution (RCE) flaw in the spring framework.

### Microsoft's Busy April Patch Tuesday

Microsoft had a major Patch Tuesday in April, issuing fixes for over 100 vulnerabilities, including 10 critical RCE flaws. One of the most important, [CVE-2022-24521](#), is already being exploited by attackers, according to the company.

Reported by the NSA and researchers at [CrowdStrike](#), the issue in the Windows Common Log File system driver doesn't require human interaction to be exploited and can be used to obtain administrative privileges on a logged-in system. Other notable fixes include CVE-2022-26904—a publicly known issue—and CVE-2022-26815, a severe DNS Server flaw.

### Mozilla Thunderbird 91.8.0 Fix

On April 5, [Mozilla](#) released a patch to fix security issues in its Thunderbird email client as well as its Firefox browser. The details are scant, but [Thunderbird 91.8](#) fixes four vulnerabilities rated as having a high impact, some of which could be exploited to run arbitrary code.

Firefox ESR 91.8 and Firefox 99 also fix multiple security issues.

### WordPress Plugin Elementor Version 3.6.3

The [Elementor](#) website builder plug-in for WordPress has received a big [security fix](#) in April for a critical-rated vulnerability that could allow attackers to perform remote code execution and effectively take over a website.

Found by researchers at [Plugin Vulnerabilities](#), the flaw was introduced in the plug-in in version 3.6.0, released on March 22. "We would recommend not using this plugin until it has had a thorough security review and all issues are addressed," the researchers said.

Although the attacker must be authenticated to exploit the issue, it's still pretty serious because anyone logged into an affected website can exploit it. The update for Elementor's 5 million users, version 3.6.3, should be applied as soon as possible.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Exodus: Russia tech workers flee
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/01/russia-tech-exodus-ukraine-war/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/01/russia-tech-exodus-ukraine-war/</a>



RIGA, Latvia — In his two-bedroom Moscow apartment, 35-year-old start-up wizard Pavel Telitchenko spent years mulling a move from Russia, fearing the gradual rise of a police state. Then, three days after the Kremlin's tanks rolled into Ukraine, he made the hard choice — packing up his young family, along with his prized vinyl-record collection, and joining a historic exodus that includes a massive outflow of Russia's best and brightest minds in tech.

"I did not want to make an emotional decision, but I could not raise my son in a country like that," said Telitchenko, who resettled in neighboring Latvia in March with his wife and 3-year-old son. He spoke in their comfortable Riga two-story walk-up, standing near a high shelf with a white Santa Claus statue from his childhood — a reminder of what he had left behind.

"The war made me realize that Russia will not change," he said.

Western attention is focused on the millions of refugees who have fled Ukraine since [the Russian assault](#) began on Feb. 24. But Russia is also in the midst of an emigration wave that is upending its spheres of arts and journalism, and especially the world of tech.

The Russian Association for Electronic Communications told the lower house of Russia's parliament last month that 50,000 to 70,000 tech workers have fled the country, with 100,000 more expected to leave over the next month — for a total of about 10 percent of the sector's workforce. Ok Russians, a new nonprofit group helping emigres, used a sampling of data from neighboring nations and social media surveys to estimate that nearly 300,000 Russians overall had left since the war began.

Mitya Aleshkovskiy, co-founder of Ok Russians, said some of those leaving are opposition activists, artists and journalists — people whom President Vladimir Putin is probably happy to see go, and whose departure could reduce active dissent within Russia. But nearly half of those leaving hail from tech — a highly transient, globally in-demand workforce that includes many who fear Russia's global isolation, newly adverse business climate and near-total authoritarianism.

The Russian government is "really scared and shocked," Aleshkovskiy said. "The prime minister of Russia has been begging these guys to stay. He's telling them, 'Don't worry that Apple leaves, we will build our own Apple Store. Please don't go.' ... But I would say that the best people are leaving right now. ... The highly skilled, highly educated, highly paid specialists."

Thousands of Russians who left, initially fearing that Putin would seal Russia's borders, have gone back in recent weeks. But at least some are expected to leave again, as experts predict a fresh wave of departures in the coming weeks and months. Experts on global migration and Russian population are calling the current exodus Russia's single fastest since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, when millions of intellectuals and economic elites fled the rise of the Soviet Union.

"In some ways, this is a first," said Jeanne Batalova, a global migration expert at the Migration Policy Institute. "We're talking about a lot of people in a very condensed period, a matter of weeks. In 1917, Russia was in the midst of a civil war. But this is happening at time when there is no war within Russia itself."

The departure of so much talent threatens to undermine a host of Russian sectors, from the state media to aerospace and aviation industries already reeling from Western sanctions. The tech and start-up ecosystem was already withering under escalating government interference and censorship.

Desperate to stem the tide, the Russian government passed an unprecedented incentive package offering IT firms tax breaks and reduced regulation. IT workers, meanwhile, are being promised subsidized housing, salary bumps, and no income tax for the next three years. Notably, the decree signed by Putin also grants IT workers an exemption from conscription into military service, something many young Russians have sought to avoid by fleeing the country.

Mikhail Mizhinsky, who runs Relocode, a London-based company helping tech firms relocate, said his Russian clients have surged to more than 200 since the war, a 20-fold increase. The largest are looking to move 1,000 employees. Most are relocating 100 to 200 staffers.

“We’ve never seen anything like this,” he said.

The tech exodus is also due to Western sanctions and the curtailing or ending of operations by Western companies including IBM, Intel and Microsoft. Smaller, Russian tech companies, or companies headed by international Russians, are also leaving. Meanwhile, major Russian tech players like Yandex, often called “the Russian Google,” have scrambled to hold on to employees who are fleeing Russia.

A person close to Yandex who spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose internal discussions said the company was studying the creation of new or expanded offices in Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey, where “many” of its engineers have recently moved.

The company has also been trying to figure out ways to overcome logistical challenges — including paying relocated staff, given that Western sanctions have largely cut Russian bank cards off from the international financial system. In March, Yandex gave a one-time cash bonus for employee retention, and has started offering its staff psychological counseling.

“The question is, shall we as a company maybe create local offices to support those engineers who left Russia, because brain drain is considered to be a big problem?” the person said. “Russian engineers are kind of great, and it’s not a big problem for them to get into Facebook or Google, so we need to compete with those tech companies.”

Interviews with logistics firms and tech workers themselves suggest they are overrepresented in the outflow because they rank among the few workers in Russia who can easily leave. International remote work, especially in the pandemic age, was already common in the sector, while foreign demand for their skills makes them good candidates for work visas outside Russia.

Many are also younger, recent university graduates who faced risks if they stayed.

“I thought I could be sent to war in the Ukraine,” said Maxim Nemkevich, a product manager at a major Russian IT firm who fled to Turkey in March after being asked by his university, where he was a consultant, to fill out a form with the “skills” he could offer the military.

“And then I thought, [Putin] would start to block IT specialists from leaving Russia, because so many of us are leaving and they need us. That convinced me it was time to leave.”

Russian tech workers, he said, are now “everywhere” in Istanbul. Temporary office spaces, restaurants and sidewalks are “filled with people speaking Russian. So many Russians are here.” He said he planned to remain in Turkey as long as possible and apply to graduate programs elsewhere in Europe.

“I’m afraid that Russia will become like North Korea. The national course will be self-isolation, and it will close all connection to the Western world, and be closely connected to China,” Nemkevich said. “I don’t not want to live in that kind of country.”

Russia was running a deficit in skilled IT workers even before its invasion of Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Digital Development last year placed the country’s shortage of tech workers between 500,000 and a million, with a deficit of 2 million projected by 2027.

And many of the Russians leaving — like Telitchenko — had contemplated emigration long before the invasion. After starting a Moscow-based platform in 2019 for large online conferences, he legally established a new company in Latvia in 2021, and obtained a resident’s visa. His longer-term plan was to commute between Moscow and Riga, but he had no immediate plan to move.

	<p>Then came the war. He was alarmed by what he described as a herd mentality of people unquestionably accepting the invasion. Others, he said, were too afraid to voice dissent. He recalled an encounter with an employee at a co-working space he rented in Moscow.</p> <p>“I could see in her eyes that something was wrong,” he said. When he asked how she was, she burst into tears, confiding her fears about the invasion.</p> <p>With bans on flights between Russia and the European Union, getting to Riga meant flying first to St. Petersburg, then riding 14 hours on a bus. Then, as for so many Russians emigres, renting an apartment was an ordeal, in part because Western sanctions made it difficult for him to withdraw money or set up a bank account.</p> <p>His mother back home fretted that everyone in Latvia — a former Soviet republic that is now a member of the European Union and NATO, and whose government is fiercely anti-Putin — would “hate Russians.” But instead, Telitchenko said, he and his family have found a warm reception among a people who lived under Moscow’s yoke in Soviet times.</p> <p>“The Latvians understand,” he said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Wall Street reluctantly embraces crypto</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/wall-street-reluctantly-embraces-crypto-11651347654?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/wall-street-reluctantly-embraces-crypto-11651347654?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>Wall Street has a message for its many clients that have been eager to invest in cryptocurrencies: OK, OK, we hear you.</p> <p>The largest U.S. banks, securities firms and custodians, many of whom once greeted the emergence of digital assets with skepticism, are now showcasing their forays into the market.</p> <p>“It’s a moment in time when the traditional industry has woken up and more broadly accepted this is happening,” said Walt Lukken, president and chief executive of the Futures Industry Association, a large trade group for the derivatives markets.</p> <p>Their recent conversion, industry executives said, has less to do with any epiphany about crypto’s utility than it does a simple reality: They don’t want to lose the business to rivals.</p> <p>Hedge funds and other professional investors were already trading cryptocurrencies, but many money managers—from mutual-fund giants to pension funds—are increasingly eager to find a way into the crypto markets, executives said. Inflation and rising interest rates have damped expectations for returns on stocks and bonds, making cryptocurrencies more attractive.</p> <p>Now the money managers, banks’ biggest clients, want to pay them to trade and lend, structure and safeguard crypto. They are uneasy with relying on crypto startups on transactions that involve other people’s money and want mainstream financial firms to settle into their traditional roles as intermediaries. Wall Street’s participation, investors say, might bring stability to the nascent markets.</p> <p>“It’s gotten to the point where everyone is at some point in the journey,” said Mike Demissie, head of digital assets and advanced solutions at <a href="#">Bank of New York Mellon Corp.</a> “If they’re not actively investing [in crypto], then they’re exploring it.”</p> <p>In response, most banks and custodians are working on plans to move forward with handling crypto—at different paces.</p> <p>Firms such as Fidelity Investments and <a href="#">Cowen Inc.</a> have started storing and trading cryptocurrencies, either on their own or through ventures with digital-asset startups. Last week, Fidelity announced <a href="#">plans to allow</a></p>

[individual savers to add bitcoin](#) to their 401(k)s. The U.S. Labor Department argued the offering would [risk Americans' retirement security](#).

BNY Mellon and rivals such as [State Street Corp.](#) are building [capabilities to store and trade bitcoin](#) and other digital assets while they await U.S. and state regulatory approvals that they say will allow them to go live with those services for institutional clients. They expect that to happen as soon as this year.

Investment banks, including [Goldman Sachs Group Inc.](#), have said they also need more regulatory input before they can handle cryptocurrencies directly. In the meantime, Goldman has started executing trades on both over-the-counter bitcoin options as well as futures listed with [CME Group Inc.](#), operator of the world's biggest derivatives exchange. The bank also recently made a loan that was secured by the borrower's bitcoin holdings.

Regulatory uncertainty is not the only reason many mainstream financial firms have waded gingerly into the crypto world. Inside these firms, the crypto skeptics can still outnumber the crypto curious. In recent years, bitcoin has been derided as both "worthless" by Jamie Dimon, CEO of the largest U.S. bank, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and "rat-poison squared" by Berkshire Hathaway Inc. CEO Warren Buffett, perhaps Wall Street's best-known investor.

Some firms don't feel compelled to lead the charge into a new market, opting instead to wait for the moment when there are enough fees to justify the risks.

"They all understand something revolutionary is taking place that will impact parts of their business model," said Damien Vanderwilt, co-president of [Galaxy Digital Holdings Ltd.](#), a firm that provides trading and advisory services to digital-asset companies and runs its own crypto investing business. "When they stop and think, 'What do we do about it,' the answer for most banks is that the opportunity today is not big enough to take the reputational risks of being early."

Jeffrey Solomon, Cowen's chairman and chief executive, said institutional investors are taking the same path they did more than 50 years ago, when stocks were largely held in personal accounts and the market struggled to handle surges in trading volume.

Advancements in computer power helped change all of that, leading to huge growth in stock-investing products managed by professionals, he said. Big-money investors—and the banks and brokers who serve them—find themselves at a similar crossroads, he said.

At the Futures Industry Association's recent annual conference, crypto was everywhere. Crypto firms sponsored the event, and their executives sat on panels. Their presence didn't go unacknowledged by the industry's old guard. While many attendees congregated in the lobby of the Boca Raton Resort & Club in mid-March, CME Chairman Terry Duffy approached [FTX crypto exchange founder Sam Bankman-Fried](#) for a quiet chat. "All eyes were on them," one attendee said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Russia struggles under hacking wave</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/05/01/russia-cyber-attacks-hacking/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/05/01/russia-cyber-attacks-hacking/</a>
GIST	<p>For more than a decade, U.S. cybersecurity experts <a href="#">have warned</a> about Russian hacking that increasingly uses the labor power of financially motivated criminal gangs to achieve political goals, such as strategically leaking campaign emails.</p> <p>Prolific <a href="#">ransomware</a> groups in the last year and a half have shut down pandemic-battered hospitals, the key fuel conduit <a href="#">Colonial Pipeline</a> and schools; published sensitive documents from corporate victims; and, in one case, pledged to step up attacks on American infrastructure if Russian technology were hobbled in retribution for the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Yet the third month of war finds Russia, not the United States, struggling under an unprecedented hacking wave that entwines government activity, political voluntarism and criminal action.</p>

Digital assailants have plundered the country's personal financial data, defaced websites and handed decades of government emails to anti-secrecy activists abroad. One recent survey showed more passwords and other sensitive data from Russia were dumped onto the open Web in March than information from any other country.

The published documents include a cache from a regional office of media regulator Roskomnadzor [that revealed](#) the topics its analysts were most concerned about on social media — including antimilitarism and drug legalization — and that it was filing reports to the FSB federal intelligence service, which has been arresting some who complain about government policies.

A separate hoard from VGTRK, or All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Co., exposed [20 years of emails](#) from the state-owned media chain and is “a big one” in expected impact, said a researcher at cybersecurity firm Recorded Future who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss his work on dangerous hacking circles.

The broadcasting cache and some of the other notable spoils were obtained by a small hacktivist group formed as the war began looking inevitable, called Network Battalion 65.

“Federation government: your lack of honor and blatant war crimes have earned you a special prize,” read one note left on a victim's network. “This bank is hacked, ransomed and soon to have sensitive data dumped on the Internet.”

In its first in-depth interview, the group told The Washington Post via encrypted chat that it gets no direction or assistance from government officials in Ukraine or elsewhere.

“We pay for our own infrastructure and dedicate our time outside of jobs and familial obligations to this,” an unnamed spokesperson said in English. “We ask nothing in return. It's just the right thing to do.”

Christopher Painter, formerly the top U.S. diplomat on cyber issues, said the surge in such activity risked escalation and interference with covert government operations. But so far, it appears to be helping U.S. goals in Russia.

“Are the targets worthy? Yes,” Painter said. “It's an interesting trend that they are now being the target of all this.”

Painter warned that Russia still has offensive capabilities, and U.S. officials [have urged](#) organizations to prepare [for an expected Russian cyber-assault](#), perhaps [held to be deployed in a moment of maximum leverage](#).

But perhaps the most important victim of the wave of attacks has been the myth of Russian cyber-superiority, which for decades helped scare hackers in other countries — as well as criminals within its borders — away from targeting a nation with such a formidable operation.

“The sense that Russia is off-limits has somewhat expired, and hacktivism is one of the most accessible forms of striking at an unjust regime or its supporting infrastructure,” said Emma Best, co-founder of [Distributed Denial of Secrets](#), which validated and published the regulator and broadcast troves among others.

While many of the hackers want to inform the public about Russia's role in areas including propaganda and energy production, Best said a secondary motivation post-invasion is “the symbolic ‘pantsing’” of Putin and some of the oligarchs.

“He's cultivated a strongman image for decades, yet not only is he unable to stop the cyberattacks and leaks hitting his government and key industries, he's the one causing it to happen.”

The volunteer hackers have gotten a first-of-its-kind boost from the government of Ukraine, which endorsed the efforts and has suggested targets through its [IT Army](#) channel on Telegram. Ukraine government hackers are assumed to be acting directly against other Russian targets, and officials have distributed hacked data including the names of troops and hundreds of FSB agents.

“There are state institutions in Ukraine interested in some of the data and actively helping some of these operations,” said an analyst at security company Flashpoint who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of his work.

Ordinary criminals with no ideological stake in the conflict have also gotten in on the act, taking advantage of preoccupied security teams to grab money as the aura of invincibility falls, researchers said.

Last month, a quarterly survey of email addresses, passwords and other sensitive data released on the open Web identified more victim accounts likely to be Russian than those from any other country. Russia topped the survey for the first time, according to Lithuanian virtual private network and security firm SurfShark, which uses the underlying information to warn affected customers.

The number of presumed Russian credentials, such as those for email addresses ending in .ru, in March jumped to encompass 50 percent of the global total, double the previous month and more than five times as many published as were in January.

“The U.S. is first most of the time. Sometimes it’s India,” said SurfShark data researcher Agneska Sablovskaja “It was really surprising for us.”

The crime business can also turn political, and it definitely has with the war in Ukraine.

Soon after the invasion, one of the most ferocious ransomware gangs, Conti, declared that it would rally to protect Russian interests in cyberspace.

The pledge backfired in a spectacular fashion, since like many Russian-speaking crime groups it had affiliates in Ukraine.

One of them then posted more than 100,000 [internal gang chats](#), and later [the source code for its core program](#), making it easier for security software to detect and block attacks.

Network Battalion 65 went further. It modified the leaked version of the Conti code to evade the new detections, improved the encryption and then used it to lock up files inside government-connected Russian companies.

“We decided it would be best to give Russia a taste of its own medicine. Conti caused (and still causes) a lot of heartache and pain for companies all around the world,” the group said. “As soon as Russia ends this stupidity in Ukraine, we will stop our attacks completely.”

In the meantime, Network Battalion 65 has asked for ransomware payments even as it has [shamed victims on Twitter](#) for having poor security. The group said it hasn’t gotten any money yet but would donate anything it collects to Ukraine.

Network Battalion obtained the state broadcast emails and other hoards and gave them to DDoSecrets, making it one of the most important of several hacktivist suppliers to that site, alongside a pro-Western group named AgainstTheWest and some who have adopted the branding of Anonymous, a larger, looser and recently resurgent collective that welcomes anyone.

In an April 3 [interview with a researcher](#) known as Dissent Doe who runs the website DataBreaches.net, AgainstTheWest’s leader said the group formed in October and was composed of six English-speaking hackers, all privately employed but with intelligence backgrounds.



	<p>The initial objective “was to steal state-secrets, government software (in the form of source codes), private documents and such. However, we also had the idea that we should act on China for attacking the west in cyberespionage campaigns over the years,” the hacker said.</p> <p>After hitting targets in China, AgainstTheWest moved on to those in North Korea, Iran and Russia.</p> <p>The leader said the group was not acting directly for any intelligence agency but declined to say whether it was being helped by any of them. “We’re doing our job in the hopes that it benefits western intelligence. We share all private documents with anyone from the government in the U.S./EU.”</p> <p>The group has made other documents public through DDoSecrets. Best received one request from a U.S. military account for access beyond what she published but turned it down.</p> <p>Painter, the former State Department and Justice Department expert, said he was concerned that some volunteer hackers might take a step too far and harm civilian infrastructure or trigger a major reaction, and he cautioned that others might be hiding additional motives.</p> <p>“In the normal course of events, you don’t want to encourage vigilante hackers,” Painter said. But he then agreed, “We’re not in a normal course of events.”</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Rise of parental surveillance of the kids</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/may/01/honey-lets-track-the-kids-phone-apps-now-allow-parents-to-track-their-children">https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/may/01/honey-lets-track-the-kids-phone-apps-now-allow-parents-to-track-their-children</a>
GIST	<p>At 4pm on a Friday afternoon in June 2019, Macy Smith, then 17 years old, was driving alone in a white hatchback near Pilot Mountain in North Carolina. The road twisted through a thick forest and a torrential summer storm lashed down. Macy lost control on a corner and the car hydroplaned, hurtling through the trees and flipping over three times before settling in a ravine. She was flung into the back seat and the vehicle pinned her left arm to the ground.</p> <p>Macy was frantic: she stretched for her phone, but couldn’t reach it. She listened out for passing cars, but it was a remote spot and they didn’t come often. The first went by without stopping, then the next, then a third. It became dark. Macy had lost feeling in the arm that was trapped, and her neck throbbed. By 10.30pm, 28 cars had come and gone. But then the 29th did stop: Macy heard the doors open, and the voices of her stepfather and brother calling her name. They followed the tyre skids down the embankment and her stepfather held her hand through the blown-out sunroof. Macy had kept it together until this point, but now she sobbed.</p> <p>The family had found Macy using the <a href="#">Find My Friends</a> app, which allows users with Apple iPhones to share their location with others. Her mother, Catrina Cramer Alexander, had checked it when Macy hadn’t come home and was not answering calls. They then jumped in their car and followed the pulsing blue dot to the ravine.</p> <p>“Having that location, if we didn’t have that, we would have never known where to look,” Alexander told a local TV station. “I’m certain that that is what saved her life.”</p> <p>What happened to Macy is every parent’s worst nightmare, though mercifully there was a happy-ish ending: Macy had a fractured neck and underwent an operation to repair nerve damage in her arm. But it’s not hard to imagine a worse outcome. What if her phone had smashed? What if it couldn’t get a signal in the forest? “It’s unreal that I survived that crash,” she said afterwards.</p> <p>Find My Friends was unveiled on 4 October 2011, the day before Steve Jobs’s death, and has been installed as standard on Apple products since 2015. But the app was not the first or even the market leader: that’s <a href="#">Life360</a>, which describes itself as a “family safety service” and has received funding from Google and Facebook since it was founded in 2008. Standard location-sharing apps, such as Find My Friends on</p>

iOS devices and Google Family Link for Android, give a GPS pinpoint for users, which they can either choose to reveal to others or not. Life360 does that too, but – for a fee – you can activate premium features, such as being notified if someone in your circle has been involved in a car accident, or if they have driven above the speed limit or even gone beyond a set “geo-fenced” area.

There is a significant market for these features. Life360 is used by 32 million people in more than 140 countries; it’s currently the seventh most downloaded social-networking app on the App Store and its San Francisco-based company has been valued at more than \$1bn. A survey of 4,000 parents and guardians in the UK in 2019 found that 40% of them used real-time GPS location tracking on a daily basis for their children; 15% said that they checked their whereabouts “constantly”.

That word “constantly” will send many teenagers into a cold sweat. At best, location-tracking apps can feel like an extension of helicopter parenting; at worst, they might feel like stalking. While all the apps tend to emphasise that they provide security for the child and peace of mind for the parent, some clearly go into deeper, more invasive territory. One, [Find My Kids](#), allows you to activate the microphone on your child’s phone remotely, so you can eavesdrop on their interactions. [OurPact](#) gives you access to screenshots of your child’s online activity, “all encrypted for maximum safety”. [Bark](#) monitors and scans messages sent from a device, looking for issues such as “cyberbullying, sexual content, online predators, depression, suicidal ideation, threats of violence, and more”. The app claims to “cover” almost 6 million children, and has detected 478,000 “self-harm situations” and 2.5m “severe bullying situations”.

Location tracking has become a battleground in many families, bringing up issues of trust, privacy and personal growth. And while the discussion mostly relates to teens, it can start much earlier. Find My Kids, which launched in Russia in 2016 and is now worldwide, notes on its website: “You’d [sic] kid is too young for a smartphone? Use children’s GPS smartwatch!” In the US, the [GizmoWatch 2](#) offers real-time location tracking and is aimed at children as young as three. [KIDSnave](#) is pitched at five-year-olds and up and offers GPS tracking and a built-in microphone to listen in on whatever is happening around your child.

All parents have to ask themselves what is best for their child. And Macy Smith and her family are in no doubt that location-tracking apps can be invaluable: in fact, after the accident, the family upgraded from Find My Friends to Life360, because of the crash detection and roadside assistance it offers.

“I know it’s hard for teenagers to give up your privacy,” Macy told ABC News, “but sneaking out and being places you don’t want your parents to know about is not worth being trapped under a car for seven hours.”

*In a sense*, location-tracking apps have crept up on us. Most parents would agree that planting a chip in your child that monitored their movements and vital signs – as depicted in the [Arkangel](#) episode of the dystopian, tech-anxiety series [Black Mirror](#) in 2018 – would be a little extreme. But smartphones have put similar technology in all of our pockets and, well, when it’s 12.30am and you want to go to bed and your kid’s not back from their friend’s house, it’s pretty difficult to resist.

“If it’s on your phone, why would you not look?” says [Sonia Livingstone](#), a professor of social psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who has written extensively on children’s rights in the digital age. “Up till now, parents and children had evolved lots of ways of handling it: ‘Phone when you reach your friend’s... I won’t worry as long as you’re home by 11.’ But now with the apps and tracking, you know everything. So it’s: ‘Why did they go to the shopping centre on the way to their friend’s? They said they were going to this friend, why are they on that side of town?’ Once you’ve got information, it is almost wrong not to look at it.”

Not all teenagers find location tracking an invasion of their privacy. Many are happy to share their whereabouts constantly with their friends: [Snap Map](#), a popular, opt-in function of [Snapchat](#), pinpoints the user’s exact position and those in their circle (with alarming accuracy) whenever the app is turned on. Some don’t even mind their parents keeping tabs on their movements. “When I think about it, it makes me feel safe, because I know that Mum or Dad knows where I am,” says Lola Pethybridge, a 17-year-old student from south London. “Or even my brother” – who is two years younger – “if it came down to him

having to figure out where I was. It's just that safety net where you can say, 'I need help.' Or, 'Can you come and get me?' And the relief of, 'Oh, someone I trust knows where I am.'"

Next year, Pethybridge hopes to go to university – will she turn off the family's Find My Friends then? "Just judging by my habits," she says, "I don't think I will."

The subject of location tracking is a more contentious issue with other families. Alicia Hardy, a solicitor from Petersfield in Hampshire, encouraged her two children, Ben and Louise, to use Find My Friends after hearing about it from her sister who lives in the US. Ben, who was 17 at the time, lasted for about a month. "At that point in my life, I wasn't necessarily that happy about Mum knowing where I was all the time," says Ben, who is now 23. He smiles, "I was sneaking out to smoke, so I didn't want Mum to see that I was leaving school."

Louise, meanwhile, was 14 and went along with her mother's Find My Friends request; now 20, they both still use it. "I introduced it not because I wanted to catch my kids out doing stuff wrong, because frankly, I did stuff wrong, but for me it was more an anxious-mother thing," explains Alicia. "Children can be on their phones all day to their mates. But they don't answer their phone to their parents or text them back. And that's really, really irritating for parents, because they systematically would not answer for hours. I tend to catastrophise, whereas Marco doesn't even think about it." (Marco Hardy, her ex-partner and Ben and Louise's father, agrees: "I've never even looked at an app or even contemplated it," he says.)

By many objective measures, young people face fewer dangers than they did a generation ago, but it probably doesn't feel like that to their parents. Livingstone has found in her research that daughters are especially likely to be tracked, with concerns about sexual assault and, in recent times, reports of drink-spiking. Many of the apps lean into these worst-case scenarios. One of the add-ons that Life360 offers is Disaster Response: "Evacuation support in case of natural disasters, active shooter events, and more."

Louise Hardy agrees that, at times, location-tracking apps have made her feel safer, but still has some conflict about them. "As a kid you're meant to do stuff that your parents don't know about," she says. "You're meant to make mistakes, you're meant to mess up. So them always having an eye on you takes away from childhood a little bit. But Mum is a worrier, so it's just a case of keeping her a bit sane."

The Hardy family are clearly very open with each other, and that's important according to [Philippa Perry](#), a psychotherapist and the *Observer Magazine*'s agony aunt. "Children sometimes want some things to be private," she says. "I never used online monitoring with my child because she was an adult before I knew about the software. I relied on that old-fashioned method of asking her where she was going. Once she answered me, 'I'm not telling you.' To which I replied, 'Darling, even Dad has to tell me where he's going so we know where to start the police search.' Which, luckily, she found reasonable."

For Perry, location tracking, like most technology, is neither good nor evil: what matters is the boundaries you set and all parties being comfortable with the negotiation. "It's not for an outsider like me to say whether or not to use it," she says. "Like all things, if you want your children to be open with you and feel like they can tell you anything, don't react angrily or negatively or dismissively when they confide in you. If you have done this in the past and now you have a mute teenager, try to repair that rupture by telling them where you overreacted in the past without making excuses for yourself and say you'll do better next time. And do better next time."

Many teens feel a line has been crossed, especially when their parents make location tracking a condition of paying their phone bill. On the online forum Reddit, on boards such as [r/insaneparents](#) and [r/raisedbynarcissists](#), kids share horror stories and screenshots of unhinged interactions with their parents. On TikTok, videos instruct users on how to change their phone settings to fool Life360 into freezing their location ("[I broke Life360, you are welcome](#)"). On Twitter, a 20-year-old called Cedar Rose from Kansas City recently made an appeal for \$3,000 so they could leave home and their "homophobic... anti-vax" parents who track their movements constantly on Life360. "This is my final resort," they wrote. "I have no freedom in this house, absolutely none. And I can't take it any more." To date, Cedar has only raised \$510, along with some snide comments that they should "just get a job".

*Whether the use* of these apps keeps children safer and more sensible is disputed, but there is obviously the potential to impact relationships between parents and their offspring: certainly where trust has been eroded, location tracking is unlikely to repair the damage. A small study in the Netherlands found that teenagers who were monitored were more secretive and less likely to confide in their parents. “If young people want their privacy, they’ll find a way of getting it,” predicts Livingstone.

Where there is more widespread agreement, though, is concern about what happens with the data that is collected. Life360, for example, made \$16m in 2020 from selling location data (it is how the app keeps its basic model free, the company states). This information might end up with insurance companies, or realistically with anyone who feels there is a value in paying for it. Livingstone says, “The idea that children are getting a detailed digital footprint not of their own making that tracks everywhere they go, and that’s being used to sell advertising to them now or later, is reprehensible.”

It’s no spoiler that in the *Black Mirror* episode Arkangel, the (well-intentioned) use of location tracking ends in disaster: the abject breakdown of trust and understanding between a mother and daughter. “In the real world, the experiment – that we have only tenuously signed up for – is ongoing and we will experience the results as they happen, with the fallout felt by our loved ones. “Children have always had times in which they were unobserved and playing outside and generally at risk and coping,” says Livingstone. “We have a crisis in mental health, so it may all be linked that they’re not developing those everyday habits of resilience. But there are some huge unknowns: we have no idea really what it is to grow up when you are constantly observed. So in that sense, we just have to say, we don’t know.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Attacks show 4chan is still a threat
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/01/4chan-extremist-online-forum-raymond-spencer">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/01/4chan-extremist-online-forum-raymond-spencer</a>
GIST	<p>When police in Washington DC burst into a fifth-floor apartment building on 22 April in search of a man who allegedly had shot four people at random, they found Raymond Spencer dead by his own hand, a cache of guns and ammunition, and a poster with an ironic white supremacist meme.</p> <p>The poster invoking the meme, popular on the extremist online forum 4chan, was a stark reminder that this attack blamed on Spencer, 23, was only the most recent mass casualty attack to spawn out of the ugly extremist culture of unregulated internet message boards such as 4chan.</p> <p>That particular forum gave birth to QAnon, the far-right conspiracy theory that Donald Trump is combating a cabal of leftist pedophiles, before it moved on to its even-more-extreme cousin 8chan. QAnon has been particularly effective in crafting the lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Trump, inspiring the Capitol riot on 6 January 2021. A bipartisan Senate committee connected seven deaths to the attack.</p> <p>Alek Minassian, 25, posted an update on Facebook with a direct reference to 4chan and its extreme misogynistic community of so-called incels, short for involuntary celibates, before launching a deadly vehicle ramming rampage in Toronto in 2018. And after New Zealand police arrested Brenton Tarrant, who shot and killed 51 worshippers in mosques in Christchurch, he cited 4chan and 8chan as direct influences.</p> <p>Seemingly by sheer luck, Spencer’s recent attack in Washington was less costly in terms of lives. But it was still a stark reminder of how many online extremists and the movements with which they sympathize can trace their origins to either 4chan or 8chan, said Oren Segal, vice-president of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism.</p> <p>“The chans – 4chan, 8chan, etc – are some of the most vile places on the internet,” Segal told the Guardian. The trolling, humor, appeals to violence: it “seeps outside the confines of the message boards,” he added.</p>

Spencer's case has chilling aspects. He fired 200 rounds from a makeshift sniper's nest, injuring a man, two women, and a 12-year-old girl. He had an additional 800 rounds stashed.

Just two minutes after the shooting began, someone under the username "Raymond Spencer" logged onto the normally-anonymous 4chan and started a new thread titled "shool [sic] shooting". The newly published message contained a link – to a 30-second video of images captured from the digital scope of Spencer's rifle. The clip streamed images and sounds of the barrage of bullets which slammed into cars and shattered windows at an adjacent school while also maiming four strangers.

Even as police stormed the apartment building where Spencer hid, with officers maneuvering past a surveillance camera that he had set up in the hallway and was monitoring, Spencer continued to post to the message board.

"They're in the wrong part of the building right now searching," he posted at one point. A few minutes later: "Waiting for police to catch up with me."

As he waited, Spencer logged on to Wikipedia to edit the entry for Edmund Burke School, which he had just opened fire on.

"A basedman shot at the school on April 22, 2022," the edit read, using a message board term derived from the word "based," which is 4chan slang for somebody who agrees to the board's warped worldview. "The suspect is still at large."

Police believe Spencer shot himself to death as officers breached his apartment.

Like those who have carried out other domestic terror attacks that rocked the US, Canada and New Zealand in recent years, Spencer situated his mass shooting in a tangle of ironic memes and 4chan in-jokes.

On a poster hanging in the apartment where Spencer died was a cartoon of a Black man with an enlarged head. It's a deeply ironic reference to Nation of Islam theology – which holds that a Black scientist named Yakub created the white race more than 6,000 years ago. 4chan co-opted the concept more recently, caricaturing it along the way, to justify its own white supremacist philosophy.

Anti-extremist groups such as the Southern Poverty Law Center have warned for years that 4chan and 8chan would continue inspiring domestic terror attacks. Cassie Miller, a researcher at the center, analyzed a self-selected survey of users to a white supremacist webforum. She found nearly 25% reported that they considered themselves radicalized – or, in their terms, "redpilled" – by the culture of 4chan and 8chan.

It was tied for the single most-reported pathway to radicalization.

While the far-right online ecosystem has grown significantly since then, the edgy humor and racist politics of 'chan' culture continue to prove influential, especially among younger users.

The chans "normalize the kinds of narratives and grievances that are dangerous", Segal said. They form a sort of "cheering section" for violence.

Even 8chan's founder, Frederick Brennan, has blamed the site for a rise in mass shootings and unsuccessfully called for it to be shut down.

Brennan quit the site in 2016, leaving management to its new owners: Jim Watkins and his son Ron. The pair, who have since been identified as the likely puppet masters behind QAnon, have rejected more active moderation and have leveraged the site's extreme free speech ethos for their own political ends – Ron Watkins is currently running in a Republican congressional primary in Arizona.

	<p>There are few good solutions on how to address the radicalizing influence of these forums, Segal said. Owners like Watkins have been unwilling to crack down on hate speech; whenever one web hosting company has removed them, another has stepped up; and law enforcement is simply ill-suited to monitor and investigate the deluge of hate on the platforms.</p> <p>It will take a “whole-of-society approach”, Segal said. “Everything that normalizes hateful ideology ... needs to be addressed.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 UK: Russia troll factory behind pro-war lies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/troll-factory-spreading-russian-pro-war-lies-online-says-uk">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/troll-factory-spreading-russian-pro-war-lies-online-says-uk</a>
GIST	<p>Russian internet trolls based in an old arms factory in St Petersburg are targeting word leaders online and spreading support for Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, the British government has said, citing research.</p> <p>Online operatives were found to be ordering followers to target western media outlets and politicians, according to research funded by the UK government, which plans to share it with major online platforms and other governments.</p> <p>The troll factory is suspected to be linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, the founder of the Internet Research Agency accused of meddling in the 2016 election that saw Donald Trump win the presidency. The headquarters is allegedly located in rented space in St Petersburg’s Arsenal Machine-building Factory, a company that manufactures military equipment and technology.</p> <p>The study details how the Russian president’s regime is trying to manipulate public opinion on social media, as well as in the comments sections of major media outlets.</p> <p>Targets include the social media accounts of Boris Johnson, the British prime minister; the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz; and the EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell.</p> <p>The research said TikTok influencers were being paid to amplify pro-Kremlin narratives. Operatives also amplified genuine messages by legitimate social media users that happen to be consistent with the Kremlin’s viewpoint – seemingly to evade social media platforms’ measures to combat disinformation.</p> <p>The analysis suggests one main activity is “brigading”, to steer attention of discussion on social media and in comments sections of newspapers towards favoured opinions. Manipulation of polls in western media was also observed, including to skew the results of a survey on whether sanctions against Russia were supported.</p> <p>Activities on Twitter and Facebook were detected, but were found to be particularly concentrated on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. A key role in the network is said to be performed by a Telegram channel called “Cyber Front Z”, with the letter Z signifying Russian support for the war.</p> <p>Social media accounts of bands and musicians including Daft Punk, David Guetta, Tiesto and Rammstein appear to have been targeted by the disinformation operation.</p> <p>Researchers say the group seems to have learned from the tactics used by QAnon conspiracy theorists and from the Islamic State terror group.</p> <p>The troll farm is said to recruit and hire salaried workers openly, justifying the work as “patriotic activity” in support of the “special military operation” in Ukraine.</p> <p>The British foreign secretary, Liz Truss, said: “We cannot allow the Kremlin and its shady troll farms to invade our online spaces with their lies about Putin’s illegal war.</p>



	<p>“The UK government has alerted international partners and will continue to work closely with allies and media platforms to undermine Russian information operations.”</p> <p>The culture secretary, Nadine Dorries, said: “These are insidious attempts by Putin and his propaganda machine to deceive the world about the brutality he’s inflicting on the people of Ukraine.</p> <p>“This evidence will help us to more effectively identify and remove Russian disinformation and follows our decisive action to block anyone from doing business with Kremlin-controlled outlets RT and Sputnik.”</p> <p>The Foreign Office was not identifying the researchers behind the work amid concerns over their safety for conducting work critical of the Russian president’s regime.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Study: 650 in WA lost \$32M; catfish scams</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-reported-32m-lost-to-catfishing-scams-in-2021-fbi-warns-of-red-flags">https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-reported-32m-lost-to-catfishing-scams-in-2021-fbi-warns-of-red-flags</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – More than 650 Washington state residents lost more than \$32 million to catfishing scams last year, according to a new study.</p> <p><a href="#">Social Catfish</a>, a website dedicated to confirming people who are who they say they are online, put together a study using FBI and FTC data on catfishing in the U.S.</p> <p>This data placed Washington state as the No. 5 most catfished state last year. KOMO News spoke with FBI Seattle Assistant Special Agent in Charge Kelly Smith.</p> <p>“It’s a thing that grows every year,” Smith said. “And I think we saw the 2021 numbers nationwide around 600 million and there are projections that 2022 will near \$1 billion in lost confidence or romance scams.”</p> <p>Victims saw a record \$547 million lost throughout the nation last year, according to the study, which also noted 2020 saw victims losing \$304 million.</p> <p>The numbers are surging.</p> <p>“I will say with the pandemic, one of the things we have seen is people are more and more likely to be accustomed to talking or meeting with people and not in person,” Smith said. “That actually makes them a little more vulnerable to falling for this type of scam.”</p> <p>The FBI is working to catch as many suspects as they can, however, romance scams live online. This gives scammers an edge on law enforcement as they can be anywhere.</p> <p>“It’s fair to say the significant amount of perpetrators are overseas,” Smith revealed. “It makes this particular crime challenging to recover funds, and actually hold individuals accountable.”</p> <p>Even if you’re not using online dating apps, you can still be a target as suspects have been known to contact victims through nearly all social media and even online video gaming.</p> <p>The numbers may be even worse than we already know. These kinds of crimes tend to be “embarrassing” for victims, Smith said, meaning there are potentially millions of dollars out there unaccounted for.</p> <p>“They become a victim and are hesitant to record this and even sometimes based on the fact that they may have an online relationship,” Smith said.</p> <p>Some victims are starting to come out, though, especially with more coverage on the catfishing scams like in the Netflix documentary <i>Tinder Swindler</i>.</p>

Washington state saw 657 total victims reported last year, they lose an average of \$48,644 each. These numbers are only lower than four other states – California, Florida, Texas and New York.

Suspects do use multiple ways to scam users, [which can be found here in detail](#). These scams range from “money mules,” where the victim becomes part of a money laundering scheme, to CryptoRom or Gift Card scams.

There are tons of ways to ensure you’re not being catfished, namely companies like Social Catfish. But Smith tells us there’s actually a simple solution, common sense and don’t send your money to someone you haven’t met in person.

“I think one of the biggest things is if you ask the victim, often they can regurgitate what the perpetrator told them, but they actually don’t understand that themselves,” Smith said. “When you kind of dig into that story. They’re like, ‘Yeah, this is what they told me to do.’ But yeah, now they don’t really understand how that works if you can’t understand it, it’s probably not something that you should be doing.

“So, I’d say those are the top three. The other thing is you’ll hear elaborate stories, relationships that escalate quickly and those should all be red flags.”

It’s also important for anyone who is lonely to involve friends or families if they become suspicious.

Smith and the FBI are urging anyone who has been scammed in any way, especially catfishing scams, to report their losses. You can report it directly to the Internet Crime Complaint Center website, [just click here](#).

[Return to Top](#)

## Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 DHS confirms: 42 on watchlist at border
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wyff4.com/article/dhs-chief-tells-migrants-at-southern-border-do-not-come/39871416#">https://www.wyff4.com/article/dhs-chief-tells-migrants-at-southern-border-do-not-come/39871416#</a>
GIST	<p><b>WASHINGTON</b> —Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Sunday doubled down on his request for migrants not to attempt to enter the U.S. through its southern border, saying his message to them is clear: "Do not come."</p> <p>"Because our border is not open," Mayorkas told CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union." "What happens now is individuals are either expelled under the Title 42 authority or they are placed in immigration enforcement proceedings. And they are removed if they do not have a valid claim under our law to remain."</p> <p>"So, just to be clear, if somebody is watching this from another country, considering coming. Your message is?" Bash asked.</p> <p>"Do not come," the secretary replied.</p> <p>Mayorkas said that if a record-breaking 18,000 migrants are encountered on the U.S.-Mexico border daily — a potential scenario put forth by DHS — it would put a "strain on the system."</p> <p>DHS has been preparing for multiple scenarios when a Trump-era pandemic restriction, known as Title 42, lifts on the U.S.-Mexico border. The authority, invoked at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, allows border officials to turn away migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border because of the public health crisis.</p> <p>The secretary maintained that the Biden administration is actively preparing for when that authority lifts. "What we do is we prepare, and we plan, and we've been doing so for months," he said Sunday. "It is our responsibility to be prepared for different scenarios and that is what we are doing."</p>

Asked about Democratic lawmakers who argue the department is not prepared for a migrant surge at the border, Mayorkas said, "I disrespectfully disagree." He stressed that preparations are underway and cited a 20-page memorandum released last week describing the plans in detail.

**'We know where they are'**

Mayorkas on Sunday also confirmed that 42 individuals who were on the terrorist screening database had been encountered on the U.S.-Mexico border, telling Fox that the administration has a "handle on it."

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, grilled Mayorkas last week over the people encountered at the southern border who were on the terrorist watch list, accusing the secretary of not knowing where they were. Mayorkas provided more information during his interview with Fox, saying he didn't want to "misspeak" in response to Jordan's question.

"We know where those 42 individuals are on the TSDB, the terrorist screening database," he said.

"Let me share with you what happens: They can be removed, they can be placed into custody for criminal prosecution, they can be cooperating in a law enforcement investigation, and I don't intend to provide that data publicly if it's law enforcement-sensitive. But we know where those 42 are, and I did not want to speak to the disposition of each and every one of them."

Asked if Americans should be worried, Mayorkas said, "We've got a handle on it," referring to the entire U.S. enforcement and intelligence enterprise, including the FBI.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Iraq: missile attack targets oil refinery
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/six-missiles-land-near-oil-refinery-iraqs-erbil-statement-2022-05-01/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/six-missiles-land-near-oil-refinery-iraqs-erbil-statement-2022-05-01/</a>
GIST	<p>ERBIL, Iraq, May 1 (Reuters) - A missile attack targeted an oil refinery in Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Sunday causing a fire in one of its main tanks that was later brought under control, the Iraqi security forces said in a statement.</p> <p>A missile also landed in the outer fence of the refinery without causing any casualties, the statement added.</p> <p>Earlier on Sunday, the anti-terrorism authorities in Kurdistan region said six missiles landed near the KAR refinery in Erbil, adding they were launched from Nineveh province.</p> <p>The security forces said they found a launch pad and four missiles in the Nineveh Plain after the attack and defused them.</p> <p>Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said the armed forces will pursue the perpetrators of what he called a "cowardly attack", while discussing the security situation in a phone call with Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, the prime minister's office said on Twitter.</p> <p>Three missiles also fell near the refinery on April 6, without causing any casualties. Sources in the Kurdistan Regional Government told Reuters then that the refinery is owned by Iraqi Kurdish businessman Baz Karim Barzanji, CEO of major domestic energy company the KAR Group.</p> <p>In March, Iran attacked Erbil with a dozen ballistic missiles in an unprecedented assault on the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region that appeared to target the United States and its allies. Only one person was hurt in that attack.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	05/01 Gitmo pretrial hearings USS Cole case
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/us/politics/afghanistan-war-crimes-uss-cole.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/us/politics/afghanistan-war-crimes-uss-cole.html</a>
GIST	<p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — Defense lawyers are delving into the early days of detainee abuse in wartime Afghanistan in pretrial hearings in the destroyer Cole case, with descriptions of a key informant being held hooded and nude, deprived of sleep, used as an ashtray, and made to clean up a fetid spill of human waste and diesel fuel with his bare hands.</p> <p>“I laughed at him while he did it,” Damien M. Corsetti, a former Army private, testified last week in sorrowful tones of his role in the military intelligence campaign to prepare a Saudi prisoner, <a href="#">Ahmed Muhammed Haza al-Darbi</a>, for interrogation at the Bagram Air Base detention facility in the summer of 2002.</p> <p>Mr. Corsetti said he also subjected Mr. Darbi to periods of painful double wrist shackling in what were called “stress positions,” sometimes on his knees, sometimes with arms raised above his head. He smashed furniture near Mr. Darbi’s hooded head and saturated the hood in a mock waterboarding. It all took place inside an old Soviet MiG hangar where, when not being interrogated or held in isolation, prisoners were forced to sit silently on rugs the size of prayer mats in one of five cages named for Qaeda attacks: Tower 1, Tower 2, the Pentagon, Pennsylvania and the Cole.</p> <p>Now it is up to an Army judge, Col. Lanny J. Acosta Jr., to decide whether to allow F.B.I. agents to testify to what Mr. Darbi told them at Bagram nearly 20 years ago at the eventual death penalty trial of <a href="#">Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri</a>. Mr. Nashiri, 57, is accused of plotting the bombing of the Navy destroyer Cole, which took place off Yemen in October 2000 and killed 17 U.S. sailors.</p> <p>No trial date has been set as Colonel Acosta considers challenges to the evidence that prosecutors want to use. The hearings are set to continue on Monday with testimony from James E. Mitchell, a psychologist who as a C.I.A. contractor <a href="#">waterboarded war on terrorism detainees</a>, including Mr. Nashiri. Defense lawyers called him as a witness to describe what was on a video that the C.I.A. <a href="#">made and then destroyed</a> of Mr. Nashiri’s interrogations at a black site in Thailand in 2002.</p> <p>Mr. Corsetti testified remotely, appearing in a video feed from a secret annex near the Pentagon that was built for the Guantánamo courtroom. He said his unit assigned him the role of menacing Mr. Darbi — using what the <a href="#">Army Field Manual</a> called “fear-up, harsh techniques” — for about six weeks in the summer of 2002 for interrogations that would take place in the same building, not just by the military but also the F.B.I. and other intelligence agencies.</p> <p>To keep Mr. Darbi awake, Mr. Corsetti said, he forced him to stand shackled at the wrists with his arms lashed above his head. Mr. Corsetti said that for a time, he also had Mr. Darbi kneel in front of him while he smoked — and used the prisoner’s uniform breast pocket as his ashtray. But Mr. Corsetti said the abuse that ultimately broke Mr. Darbi came when the Army private ordered him to scoop up a mixture of prisoners’ feces and urine, and fuel that had spilled from the prisoners’ toilet, a sliced-open 55-gallon drum.</p> <p>“His hands were covered in waste by the end of it,” Mr. Corsetti said. “As a Saudi, it was very effective to make him do physical labor.”</p> <p>At one point, a military prosecutor suggested that Mr. Corsetti was lying to get even with the Army, which court-martialed and then <a href="#">acquitted him</a> in 2006. “I love my country, sir,” Mr. Corsetti told a defense lawyer. “I would never do that.”</p> <p>Mr. Darbi, who was held at Guantánamo Bay for 15 years, will not be available to testify at the trial. He has already pleaded guilty to terrorism charges in a military commission and was returned in 2018 to his native Saudi Arabia, where he is serving a 13-year prison sentence. So the F.B.I. agents who questioned him in 2002 would be called in his place.</p>

Mr. Corsetti described what he did as role-playing in team-planned preparation of prisoners for interrogations, and said he was following military orders. He testified last week that he and another guard were so troubled by some planning for sleep deprivation that they questioned whether it was lawful — and were advised by their commanders that U.S. military lawyers had approved it.

The lead prosecutor, Mark A. Miller, a Justice Department lawyer assigned to the Cole case, said that what happened to Mr. Darbi was “unpleasant” and “shouldn’t have been done,” but that it did not meet a legal definition of torture.

Moreover, he said, the F.B.I. agents who questioned Mr. Darbi at the Bagram detention facility continued to do so after the period of sleep deprivation had ended, and they described their conversations with the captive as consensual and even friendly. One agent treated the prisoner to Twinkies that an agent had received in a care package from home.

Even if the judge were to decide that Mr. Darbi was tortured, Mr. Miller said, the law governing military commissions prohibits only the use of evidence that was obtained using torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of a defendant, in this case Mr. Nashiri. Testimony about what a witness said under those circumstances can be admissible at a trial, he said.

Lt. Cmdr. Alaric A. Piette, Mr. Nashiri’s lawyer and a former member of the Navy SEALs, urged the judge to reject the testimony from the F.B.I. agents as “tainted by torture.”

He said that other U.S. civilian and military courts would not allow the use of such testimony and argued that the war court should follow suit. “What the government is asking us to do as we build this justice system at Guantánamo Bay,” he said, “is to set aside what we know is abhorrent.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 ISIS bloody new chapter in Afghanistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/asia/afghanistan-isis-attacks.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/world/asia/afghanistan-isis-attacks.html</a>
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan — The first blast ripped through a school in Kabul, the Afghan capital, killing high school students. Days later, explosions destroyed two mosques and a minibus in the north of the country. The following week, three more explosions targeted Shiite and Sufi Muslims.</p> <p>The attacks of the past two weeks have left at least 100 people dead, figures from hospitals suggest, and stoked fears that Afghanistan is heading into a violent spring, as the Islamic State’s affiliate in the country tries to undermine the Taliban government and assert its newfound reach.</p> <p>The sudden spate of attacks across the country has upended the relative calm that followed the Taliban’s seizing of power last August, which ended 20 years of war. And by targeting civilians — the Hazara Shiite, an ethnic minority, and Sufis, who <a href="#">practice a mystical form of Islam</a>, in recent weeks — they have stirred dread that the country may not be able to escape a long cycle of violence.</p> <p>The Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan — known as <a href="#">Islamic State Khorasan, or ISIS-K</a> — has claimed responsibility for four of the seven recent major attacks, according to SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks extremist organizations. Those that remain unclaimed fit the profile of previous attacks by the group, which considers Shiites and Sufis heretics.</p> <p>With the attacks, ISIS-K has undercut the Taliban’s claim that they had extinguished any threat from the Islamic State in the country. It has also reinforced concerns about a potential resurgence of extremist groups in Afghanistan that could eventually pose an international threat.</p> <p>Last month the Islamic State claimed it had fired rockets into Uzbekistan from northern Afghanistan — the first such purported attack by the group on a Central Asian nation.</p> <p>“ISIS-K is resilient, it survived years of airstrikes from NATO forces and ground operations from the Taliban during its insurgency,” said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Wilson</p>

Center, a think tank in Washington. “Now after the Taliban takeover and the U.S. departure, ISIS-K has emerged even stronger.”

ISIS-K was established in 2015 by disaffected Pakistani Taliban fighters. The group’s ideology took hold partly because many villages there are home to Salafi Muslims, the same branch of Sunni Islam as the Islamic State. Salafists are a smaller minority among the Taliban, who mostly follow the Hanafi school.

Since its founding, ISIS-K has been antagonistic toward the Taliban: At times the two groups have fought for turf, and last year Islamic State leaders [denounced the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan](#), saying that the group’s version of Islamic rule was insufficiently hard line.

Still, for most of the past six years the Islamic State has been contained to eastern Afghanistan amid American airstrikes and Afghan commando raids that killed many of its leaders. But since the Taliban seized power, the Islamic State has grown in reach and expanded to nearly all 34 provinces, [according to the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan](#).

After the Taliban broke open prisons across the country during their military advance last summer, the number of Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan [doubled to nearly 4,000](#), the U.N. found.

The group also ramped up its activity across the country, said Abdul Sayed, a security specialist and researcher who tracks ISIS-K and other jihadist groups. In the last four months of 2021, the Islamic State carried out 119 attacks in Afghanistan, up from 39 during the same period a year earlier. They included suicide bombings, assassinations and ambushes on security checkpoints.

Of those, 96 targeted Taliban officials or security forces, compared with only two in the same period in 2020 — a marked shift from earlier last year when the group primarily targeted civilians, including activists and journalists.

In response, the Taliban carried out a brutal campaign last year against suspected Islamic State fighters in the eastern province of Nangarhar. Their approach relied heavily on extrajudicial detentions and killings of those suspected of belonging to the Islamic State, according to local residents, analysts and human rights monitors.

For months this past winter, attacks by the Islamic State dwindled — raising some hope that the Taliban’s campaign was proving effective. But the recent spate of high-profile attacks that have claimed many civilian lives suggests that the Islamic State used the winter to regroup for a spring offensive — a pattern perfected by the Taliban when it was an insurgency.

While ISIS-K does not appear to be trying to seize territory, as the Islamic State did in Iraq and Syria, the attacks have demonstrated the group’s ability to sow violent chaos despite the Taliban’s heavy-handed tactics, analysts say.

They have also stoked concerns that, sensing perceived weakness in the Taliban government, other extremist groups in the region that already have reason to resent the Taliban may shift alliances to the Islamic State.

“ISIS-K wants to show its breadth and reach beyond Afghanistan, that its jihad is more violent than that of the Taliban, and that it is a purer organization that doesn’t compromise on who is righteous and who isn’t,” said Asfandyar Mir, a senior expert at the United States Institute of Peace.

The blasts have particularly rattled the country’s Hazara Shiites, who have long feared that the Taliban — which persecuted Afghan Shiites for decades — would allow violence against them to go unchecked. The strife has also caused concern in neighboring Iran, a Shiite theocracy.



	<p>Many Afghan Shiites have been on edge since suicide bombings by the Islamic State at Shiite mosques in <a href="#">one northern</a> and <a href="#">one southern</a> city together killed more than 90 people last October. The recent blasts, which mainly targeted areas dominated by Hazara communities, deepened those fears.</p> <p>Late last month, Saeed Mohammad Agha Husseini, 21, was standing outside his home in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul, a Hazara-dominated area, when he felt the thud of an explosion. He and his father raced to the school down the street, where throngs of terrified students poured out its gate, the bloodied bodies of some of their classmates sprawled across the pavement.</p> <p>His father rushed to help the victims, but minutes later Mr. Husseini heard another deafening boom. A second explosion hit the school's gate, fatally wounding his father.</p> <p>A week later, Mr. Husseini sat under the shade of a small awning with his relatives to mourn. Outside, their once-bustling street was quiet, the fear of another explosion still ripe. At the school, community leaders had been discussing hiring guards to take security into their own hands.</p> <p>"The government cannot protect us, we are not safe," Mr. Husseini said. "We have to think about ourselves and take care of our security."</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/02 China's suicide terror problem in Pakistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://asiatimes.com/2022/05/china-has-a-suicide-terror-problem-in-pakistan/">https://asiatimes.com/2022/05/china-has-a-suicide-terror-problem-in-pakistan/</a>
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR – China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Pakistan is being targeted by an intensifying Balochistan insurgency that has so far claimed dozens of lives including three Chinese teachers last week in a daring suicide attack carried out by a female operative of the insurgent Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).</p> <p>Shari Baloch, a 31-year-old teacher, mother of two and a post-graduate philosophy student, blew herself up in front of a van carrying Chinese teachers near the Confucius Institute in the southern seaport city of Karachi on April 26, killing at least three Chinese nationals along with their Pakistani driver.</p> <p>The banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its lethal guerrilla cell, Majeed Brigade, have claimed the responsibility for the suicide attack, which killed four in Karachi.</p> <p>Hours after the BLA operative detonated the explosive-laden bag in front of the approaching van, the militant group told an international news channel that the female operative targeted the Confucius institute, which they believed was a "symbol of Chinese economic, cultural and political expansionism."</p> <p>"It will give a clear message to China that its presence in Balochistan will not be tolerated," the BLA representative told the news channel.</p> <p>China's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned and expressed "great indignation over this major terrorist attack" and called on Pakistani authorities to "resolutely crack down on the terrorist organizations involved."</p> <p>"The blood of the Chinese people should not be shed in vain and those behind this incident will pay the price," the Chinese ministry said.</p> <p>New Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad hours after the deadly blast to express his condolences and vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice.</p> <p>The blast came in the wider geopolitical context of politically-charged accusations that the United States orchestrated former premier Imran Khan's parliamentary ouster to make the way for Sharif's rise. The allegations are still wholly unproven, however.</p>

The BLA has carried out at least eight attacks this year including two major gun-and-bomb suicide attacks on Frontier Corps camps in Panjgur and Nushki districts, killing at least 12 soldiers. In 2018, the BLA orchestrated a suicide attack on the Chinese consulate in the Pakistani port city of Karachi, killing at least four people.

In 2020, the group targeted the Pakistan Stock Exchange building in Karachi. At least three security guards and a police sub-inspector were killed, while seven people were injured during the attack. Chinese companies have a major shareholding in the Karachi stock exchange.

Since January this year, different Baloch groups have carried out at least 17 attacks, including 10 against security forces, taking 51 lives and injuring 97 others. In March alone, three attacks struck the Balochistan city of Sibi, killing at least 12 Pakistan security personnel.

Mansur Khan Mahsud, executive director of the Islamabad-based FATA Research Centre (FRC), an independent think tank, told Asia Times that the Baloch insurgency is becoming an escalating problem for the Pakistani state.

“It has changed from low-level insurgency to serious and bloody one. Baloch insurgency is now a highly charged insurgency equipped with a suicidal squad by the name of the Majid Brigade composed of men and women suicide bombers,” Mansur said.

“[The] Baloch insurgency is not only confined to Balochistan but it has spread to other provinces of Pakistan as well. During the past couple of years, three major attacks involving the Chinese nationals had been carried out in Sindh province alone. The recent incident may not be the last,” Mansur added.

The recent suicide attack has stirred a public debate about what may have caused an educated and married woman to involve herself in an insurgency aimed at liberating a mineral-rich and geostrategically important province.

Many say that the attack marks a certain intensification of the decades-old Baloch insurgency that is locked in a violent stalemate with Islamabad and by association Beijing as the financier of various China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) related infrastructure projects in Balochistan province.

Security analysts say that the use of a woman bomber in the suicide attack signals a paradigm shift in the BLA’s “liberation efforts” in Balochistan. Baloch separatists claim that the Pakistan army in cohort with Chinese developers extracts the region’s precious resources while subjugating the local population.

The secular, ethnic-based BLA has claimed to have established a new suicide unit to attack the CPEC and related projects in the province. “The mission carried out by the first female fidayee of the suicide brigade has added a new chapter in Baloch resistance history,” said a statement issued by BLA just hours after the attack.

Baloch nationalists claim that the insurgency in Balochistan is largely the blowback of human rights violations committed by the Pakistani state, including forced disappearances and killings of voices of dissent. The continued violence spanning over the past two decades, they say, has developed the tribal rebellion into a full-blown insurgency, which now attracts many highly educated Baloch professionals to the ranks of the militants.

“The Karachi attack on Chinese nationals should serve as a wake-up call to the Pakistani establishment. It indicates that a sense of deprivation in Balochistan runs deep and genuine grievances of Baloch remain unresolved,” Mushahid Hussain Sayed, a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senator and chairperson of the Senate Defense Committee, told Asia Times. “Running the province by remote control and constant power plays is a tried, tested and failed formula, as people feel alienated.”

Suggesting a way forward, Mushahid said that the authorities should stop treating Balochistan as a political plaything, frequently picking, choosing and changing “favorites.” He also said that the shameful

	<p>crime of “missing persons should end forthwith” and that the benefits of development are allowed to reach local communities.</p> <p>Mushahid said that terror groups can strike at will in Karachi, Dasu, Gwadar and anywhere in the country because security warnings often go unheeded, counterterrorism systems are outmoded and intelligence-sharing and coordination were abysmally weak, with the result that such incidents were not prevented.</p> <p>Moreover, analysts say that the situation in Afghanistan has caused an uptick in militancy in Pakistan because the now-ruling Afghan Taliban are reluctant to take action against militants who carry out terrorist activities in Pakistan from across the border.</p> <p>Kabul and Islamabad have averted serious border clashes over the militant issue but the Afghan Taliban are still hesitant to crack down on militant elements bent on stirring instability in Pakistan.</p> <p>“Baloch insurgents have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Iran. However, both countries were taking no action against the Baloch insurgents based in their countries. Their attacks against government employees, police, army and Frontier Corps have increased significantly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces,” Mansur said.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Iran-Taliban tensions rise, Afghan tinderbox</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-taliban-tensions-rise-afghan-migrants-tinderbox-84436533">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-taliban-tensions-rise-afghan-migrants-tinderbox-84436533</a>
GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran -- The Taliban members who killed her activist husband offered Zahra Hussein a deal: Marry one of us, and you'll be safe.</p> <p>Hussein, 31, decided to flee. Through swaths of lawless flatlands she and her two small children trekked by foot, motorcycle and truck until reaching Iran.</p> <p>As Afghanistan plunged into economic crisis after the United States withdrew troops and the Taliban seized power, the 960-kilometer (572-mile) long border with Iran became a lifeline for Afghans who piled into smugglers' pickups in desperate search of money and work.</p> <p>But in recent weeks the desert crossing, long a dangerous corner of the world, has become a growing source of tension as an estimated 5,000 Afghans traverse it each day and the neighbors — erstwhile enemies that trade fuel, share water and have a tortured history — navigate an increasingly charged relationship.</p> <p>In past weeks, skirmishes erupted between Taliban and Iranian border guards. Afghans in three cities rallied against Iran. Demonstrators hurled stones and set fires outside an Iranian Consulate. A fatal stabbing spree, allegedly by an Afghan migrant, at Iran's holiest shrine sent shockwaves through the country.</p> <p>Political analysts say even as both nations do not want an escalation, long-smoldering hostilities risk spiraling out of control.</p> <p>“You have one of the world’s worst-simmering refugee crises just chugging along on a daily pace and historical enmity,” said Andrew Watkins, senior Afghanistan expert at the United States Institute of Peace. “Earthquakes will happen.”</p> <p>The perils are personal for Afghans slipping across the border like Hussein. Since the Taliban takeover, Iran has escalated its deportations of Afghan migrants, according to the U.N. migration agency, warning that its sanctions-hit economy cannot handle the influx.</p>

In the first three months of this year, Iran's deportations jumped 60% each month, said Ashley Carl, deputy chief of the agency's Afghanistan mission. Many of the 251,000 returned from Iran this year bear the wounds and scars of the arduous trip, he said, surviving car accidents, gunshots and other travails.

Roshangol Hakimi, a 35-year-old who fled to Iran after the Taliban takeover, said smugglers held her and her 9-year-old daughter hostage over a week until her relatives paid ransom.

"They would feed us with polluted water and hard, stale bread," she said. "We were dying."

The lucky ones land in the jumble of Tehran, squeezing into dank and crowded alleyways. Iran estimates at least a million Afghans have sought refuge in the country over the last eight months.

Like many, Hussein lives in legal limbo, vulnerable to harassment and exploitation. Her boss at the tailor's shop refuses to pay her salary. Her landlord threatens to kick her out. She can barely cobble together enough cash to feed her children.

"We have nothing and nowhere to go," she said from a cramped room in southern Tehran, furnished with just a donated gas heater, chairs and a few velvet blankets.

As more Afghans arrive, helping them gets harder. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh lamented last month that "waves of displaced Afghans cannot continue to Iran" because Iran's "capacities are limited." Iran's youth unemployment hovers over 23%. Iran's currency, the rial, has shriveled to less than 50% of its value since 2018.

"The biggest challenge is that Iran is not ready for the new situation of refugees," Tehran-based political analyst Rea Ghobeishavi said of the increasing friction between Afghans and Iranians.

Iran has grown more anxious as a string of bloody attacks in Afghanistan targeting the country's minority Hazara Shiites makes clear that extremist threats proliferate despite Taliban promises to provide security.

"There are reports that some extremists are entering Iran easily with refugees," said Abbas Hussein, a prominent Afghan journalist in Tehran, describing mounting paranoia in Iran.

Last month, Iran's most sacred Shiite shrine in the northeastern city of Mashhad turned into a scene of carnage when an assailant stabbed three clerics, killing two — a rare act of violence at the compound. The attacker was identified in media as an Afghan national of Uzbek ethnicity.

In the following days, a surge of videos agitating against Afghan refugees flooded Iranian social media. Impossible to authenticate, the grainy clips — footage showing Iranians insulting and beating up Afghans — have been dismissed as misleading in Iran but in Afghanistan have dominated headlines, stoking public fury.

Demonstrators attacked the Iranian Consulate in the western city of Herat with stones and protested at Iran's Embassy in Kabul. "Stop killing Afghans," pleaded protesters in the Afghan capital. "Death to Iran," chanted crowds in Herat and the southeastern Khost province. Iran suspended all of its diplomatic missions in Afghanistan for 10 days.

Even as the gate of its consulate smoldered, Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan deflected. Hassan Kazemi Qomi blamed the escalating tensions on a vague "enemy" seeking to subvert the nations' relations. Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi raised his concerns with the Iranian ambassador.

"The ill-treatment of Afghan refugees in Iran adversely affects relations between the two countries ... allowing antagonists to conspire," Muttaqi was quoted as saying.

His careful tone betrays a troubled history.

In 1998, Iran nearly went to war against the Taliban after 10 of its diplomats were killed when their consulate was stormed in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. But after the U.S.-led invasion, Tehran's Shiite leaders grew wary of the American military presence on their doorstep and took a more pragmatic stance toward the Sunni militant group.

Now, analysts say, with both nations severed from the global banking system and starved for cash, they have come to depend on each other. Neither wants to see tensions mount further.

“Through neighbors, Iran can sanctions-bust, exchange currency, barter and keep its economy alive,” said Sanam Vakil, deputy director of Chatham House’s Middle East and North Africa Program.

But the neighbors nearly came to blows last week when Taliban guards tried to pave a new road across the border. Iranian guards went on high alert. The vital crossing closed.

Aware of the stakes, the countries are vigorously pursuing diplomacy. Last week, Khatibzadeh promised Tehran would accredit Taliban diplomats for the first time to help process the mountains of consular cases. Taliban officials visited the capital to discuss Iran's treatment of Afghan refugees.

Many of those refugees fleeing Afghanistan's repression and destitution harbor humble dreams: of scraping by as construction laborers, factory workers and farmhands in Iran.

Others, like Hakimi's 9-year-old daughter Yasmin, hope to continue on to Europe. She fantasizes about Germany. Her father, a police officer killed by the Taliban in Logar province, instilled in her the importance of an education, she said.

“We don’t want to have a bad future,” Yasmin said from her dilapidated Tehran apartment. “We want to become literate people, like my father.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Mossad in Iran foils IRGC plot</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/article-705523">https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/article-705523</a>
GIST	<p>The Mossad – operating in Iran – apprehended and interrogated an Iranian national who was leading a plot to kill an Israeli diplomat and a US general, sources have confirmed.</p> <p>An audio recording released on Saturday showed a photo of Mansour Rasouli admitting he had been ordered to establish a cell to assassinate a worker at the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul, a US general stationed in Germany and a journalist in France.</p> <p>Rasouli was arrested and questioned in Iran, a rarity as the Mossad regularly operates in conjunction with foreign intelligence services to thwart attacks but almost always from outside the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>Officials said the planned attack shows the threat the <a href="#">Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps</a> poses is not isolated to Israel and needs to be confronted accordingly.</p> <p>News of the thwarted plot was first reported by London-based <i>Iran International</i> on Saturday.</p> <p>The Quds Force, the IRGC branch responsible for overseas operations, planned to carry out the assassinations via drug cartels, with the Islamic Republic reportedly willing to pay over \$1 million for the targets.</p> <p>The planned hits were organized by a member of <a href="#">Quds Force’s Unit 840</a> stationed in Europe, who was paid \$150,000 to “prepare for the assassinations” by using his connections to various European drug lords.</p> <p>Unit 840 is a relatively secretive operational unit that organizes terrorist infrastructure outside Iran against Western targets and opposition groups, according to the IDF.</p>

	<p>Defense officials said the failed assassinations join a long list of similar plots, including recent ones in Kenya and Colombia.</p> <p>Turkish, British and American reports over the last few years have accused Iran of using major international crime organizations to help advance its goals abroad, which include carrying out terrorist plots. According to reports, Iranian intelligence has employed the Zindashti cartel, headed by heroin kingpin Naji Sharifi Zindashti, to assassinate or abduct Iranian dissidents living in Turkey since 2015.</p> <p>In 2020, Turkish police said 13 people connected to Zindashti were arrested on charges of collaboration with Iran's intelligence operations.</p> <p>In February, Turkish media reported that Turkish and Israeli intelligence forces foiled an Iranian assassination attempt on the life of Israeli businessman Yair Geller. In October 2021, it was reported that Israeli businessmen, including Teddy Sagi, were the targets of Iranian terror in Cyprus.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 India: 62 militants killed in Kashmir in 2022</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-forces-kill-62-militants-this-year-disputed-kashmir-police-2022-05-01/">https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-forces-kill-62-militants-this-year-disputed-kashmir-police-2022-05-01/</a>
GIST	<p>SRINAGAR, India May 1 (Reuters) - Indian security forces have killed 62 militants, including 15 foreigners, in the disputed Jammu &amp; Kashmir region this year, a senior police official said on Sunday.</p> <p>Kashmir, claimed by India and Pakistan but ruled in parts by each country, has long been the site of an armed insurrection against New Delhi. Two of the three wars between India and Pakistan have been fought over Kashmir.</p> <p>India, which says it seeks to keep Islamist militant groups from expanding their base, accuses Pakistan of funding militant groups who want independence for Indian-administered Kashmir, a claim Islamabad denies.</p> <p>The state's police chief, Vijay Kumar, said some of the militants killed this year had links with Lashkar-e-Taiba, a militant group that has in recent years allegedly recruited and trained men to fight Indian authority in Kashmir.</p> <p>A hallmark of the group is to conduct "fedayeen" attacks where men are willing to fight to the death but are not suicide bombers.</p> <p>Kumar said 15 militants linked with the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad - which took responsibility for one of the deadliest attacks on security forces in Indian Kashmir in 2019 - were among those killed in a series of operations.</p> <p>"The surviving rate of militants has drastically decreased due to enhanced human, technical intelligence and focussed operations," Kumar told Reuters.</p> <p>Members of Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the largest anti-Indian Kashmiri militant groups, were also among those killed, he said. He said 193 militants were killed in 2021 and 232 in 2020.</p> <p>Broad search and detention operations by Indian forces are common in the region, which has had an armed resistance movement since 1989.</p> <p>Rights groups say arbitrary detentions and killings by Indian troops are leading to a range of human rights violations.</p> <p>Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 withdrew Indian-ruled Kashmir's autonomy in order to tighten his grip over the territory, provoking outrage in Pakistan.</p>



	The decision, the most far-reaching political move in one of the world's most militarised regions in nearly seven decades, polarised opinion, with Kashmiri leaders calling it aggression against the state's people.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Egypt: IS militants blow up Sinai pipeline</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egyptian-officials-militants-blow-gas-pipeline-sinai-84419716">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egyptian-officials-militants-blow-gas-pipeline-sinai-84419716</a>
GIST	<p>EL ARISH, Egypt -- Suspected Islamic State militants blew up a natural gas pipeline Saturday in Egypt's restive northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, causing a fire but no casualties, security officials said.</p> <p>The officials said the suspected militants planted explosives under a pipeline in the town of Bir al-Abd.</p> <p>The expulsion sent thick flames of fire shooting into the sky, and authorities stopped the flow of gas to extinguish the fire, according to eyewitnesses.</p> <p>The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to media and the eyewitnesses asked not to be named for fear of reprisal.</p> <p>No group immediately claimed the attack which caused no human casualties.</p> <p>The Islamic State group affiliate, which is centered in Northern Sinai, however, has claimed previous attacks targeted gas pipelines between Egypt and both Jordan and Israel.</p> <p>Egypt is battling an Islamic State-led insurgency in the Sinai that intensified after the military overthrew an elected but divisive Islamist president in 2013. The militants have carried out scores of attacks, mainly targeting security forces and Christians.</p> <p>Saturday's attack comes as the militants suffered heavy losses in recent months with Egyptian security forces, aided by armed tribesmen, who intensified their efforts to eliminate the group.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Morocco aims to deradicalize IS veterans</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/moroccan-prison-program-aims-de-radicalize-veterans-84424043">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/moroccan-prison-program-aims-de-radicalize-veterans-84424043</a>
GIST	<p>SALE, Morocco -- As a combatant for the Islamic State group who left his native Morocco to join what he felt was a holy fight in Syria, Mohsin says he saw all the horrors of war. "A terrifying experience," he says.</p> <p>Now a prisoner, the 38-year-old claims he is no longer the fanatic he was then, enraged with a murderous hatred for non-Muslims. Captured in Turkey and extradited to Morocco, he is serving a 10-year prison term on terrorism charges.</p> <p>Now the former fighter has graduated with 14 other prisoners convicted of terror offenses from a Morocco de-radicalization program that might make them more eligible for an early release.</p> <p>The Associated Press and other media were invited to observe their graduation ceremony Thursday in a prison in Sale near the Moroccan capital, Rabat, and to interview some prisoners under monitored and controlled conditions. Prison administration officials picked out three men they said were willing to be interviewed. Officials stipulated that the inmates shouldn't be identified by their full names and that their faces mustn't be shown, citing privacy reasons.</p> <p>But prison officials didn't listen to the interviews or intervene to shut down media lines of questioning or inmates' answers.</p>

The 15 inmates in crisp shirts and trousers stood solemnly for Morocco's national anthem and were handed certificates. Prison officials said the de-radicalization program consisted of three months of classes in prison on religion, law and economics, and that inmates also received training on how to start a business. These most recent graduates were the ninth batch since the program started in 2017.

Moulay Idriss Agoulmam, the director of social-cultural action and prisoner reintegration at Morocco's prison administration, said the program is entirely voluntary and works with inmates "to change their behaviour and improve their life path."

"It enables prisoners to form an awareness of the gravity of their mistakes," he said.

Graduating from the program doesn't make inmates automatically eligible for early release, but does increase their chances of getting a royal pardon or a reduced sentence. That's been the case for just over half of the program's 222 graduates so far, the prison administration says. Since 2019, the training has also been offered to women convicted under Morocco's Anti-Terrorism Act. Ten women have graduated so far — all of them since released, including eight with pardons.

Called "Moussalaha," meaning "reconciliation" in Arabic, the program is offered to prisoners who have demonstrated a readiness to disavow extremism.

Mohsin said he left to fight in Syria in 2012. A school dropout as a teen, he said he "was virtually illiterate and couldn't discern good from bad." He said he was radicalized by people who showed him extremist videos "about the divine obligation to battle those who don't follow Islamic principles and to murder non-Muslims."

In Syria, "I saw massacres, rapes, and thefts," he said. "I concluded after a time that the fight being conducted in the name of Islam had nothing to do with our religion."

He escaped to Turkey in 2018 and was detained for a year there before being extradited to Morocco.

He says he has now disavowed extremism.

"That period of my life has passed," he said.

Numerous Moroccans have traveled to Syria, Iraq and elsewhere to join extremist groups. Morocco has also experienced multiple attacks itself. Five suicide attacks in Casablanca in 2003 killed 33 people. In 2011, an explosion destroyed a cafe in Marrakech, killing 17 people, most of them foreign tourists.

Al Mustapaha Razrazi, a clinical psychologist and member of the program's scientific committee, said among 156 people who have been released after attending the courses, just one has been caught committing a crime again.

That person was convicted of a non-terrorism-related offense, he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Pakistan airstrikes eastern Afghanistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/asia/pakistan-airstrikes-afghanistan-taliban.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/asia/pakistan-airstrikes-afghanistan-taliban.html</a>
GIST	<p>MANDATAH VILLAGE, Afghanistan — It was nearly 3 a.m. in the mountainous borderlands of eastern Afghanistan when a deafening thud jolted Qudratullah awake. Confused, he staggered to the doorway of his mud brick home, looked outside and froze.</p> <p>Thick plumes of black smoke and dust filled the air. The front of the modest house where his relatives lived was a pile of rubble. His 3-year-old nephew stood in the yard, sobbing. Behind him, four more children were sprawled across the pale earth, their lifeless frames soaked in blood.</p> <p>Qudratullah ran toward them, he said. Then another blast struck.</p>

His village, Mandatah, was one of four in eastern Afghanistan hit this month by Pakistani airstrikes, Afghan officials said, killing at least 45 people, including 20 children.

Among them were 27 of Qudratullah's relatives — an almost incomprehensible loss. Qudratullah, 18, who like many in Afghanistan goes by only one name, lost his 16-year-old wife, who was crushed beneath a pile of rubble in the second airstrike. His older brother, who survived, lost all four of his daughters, all under 11.

"I'm devastated," Qudratullah said. "I lost my wife, my relatives, our home, our vehicles, our animals, everything."

The [pre-dawn airstrikes in Khost and Kunar Provinces](#) two weeks ago marked a serious escalation of the cross-border conflict in this remote, wild and rocky stretch of Afghanistan, and exacerbated tensions between the two countries that have navigated a delicate relationship since the Taliban seized power last year.

Pakistani officials have not confirmed or commented on the airstrikes.

The airstrikes, which Afghan officials said were carried out by Pakistani military aircraft, came several days after militants said to be operating from the area killed seven soldiers across the border in Pakistan.

In eastern Afghanistan, many feared that the carnage of the recent airstrikes was the beginning of a violent new chapter of the long-running conflict in the tribal lands that spill across the porous border. Reinforcing those concerns, Afghanistan's acting minister of defense, Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob, warned in a speech on Sunday that the Taliban government would not tolerate any more "invasions" from neighboring countries on Afghan soil.

"Pakistan sending in manned aircraft and killing so many people in different places, the Taliban's defense minister threatening war if there are more attacks — this is a turning point," said Asfandiyar Mir, a senior expert at the United States Institute of Peace.

[For over a decade](#), Pakistani authorities have sought to stamp out the militants hostile to the Pakistani state in Afghanistan's borderlands, sporadically hitting the area with artillery that have killed a handful of civilians each year.

After the Taliban toppled the Western-backed government in Afghanistan, many in Pakistan hoped that the insurgents turned rulers — who benefited from Pakistan's support over the past 20 years of war — would rein in the violence by the militants, known as [Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan](#) or the Pakistani Taliban.

But in recent months, attacks by the group in Pakistan have surged: Since the [Western-backed Afghan government collapsed in August](#), the Pakistani Taliban have carried out 82 attacks in Pakistan, more than double the number over the same period of the previous year, according to the Islamabad-based Pak Institute of Peace Studies. The attacks killed 133 people.

Those numbers are still relatively low compared with the height of the Pakistani Taliban's insurgency around 2009, but the recent sharp increase in violence has fueled fears that the group is gaining strength after having declined over the past decade, and has reinforced concerns that Afghanistan under the new Taliban government could become a haven for militants.

The Islamic State has carried out several attacks across the country, mainly against Afghanistan's Shiite minorities, while the Pakistani Taliban have resurged in the east, analysts say.

Taliban officials have denied providing safe haven for militants, including the Pakistani Taliban, but the issue has become a flash point between Afghan and Pakistani authorities, who claim that the militant

group — which is responsible for some of the worst terrorist attacks in Pakistan’s history — has become emboldened under the new Taliban government and allowed to operate freely on Afghan soil.

The Pakistani Taliban, which analysts estimate to have several thousand fighters in eastern Afghanistan, have maintained ties with the Taliban for over a decade and pledged allegiance to the Taliban leader. Hundreds of jailed Pakistani Taliban militants were released from prison last year as the Afghan Taliban seized control of major cities and liberated their prisons.

“It would be fair to describe the T.T.P. as the ideological twin of the Afghan Taliban,” said Madiha Afzal, a fellow at the Brookings Institution, using the abbreviation for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. “When the Taliban took over Afghanistan last year, the T.T.P. hailed the Taliban’s ‘victory’ and renewed its oath of allegiance.”

The villages hit in the recent airstrikes are nestled between mountains blanketed in pine forests. With soil too stubborn for large-scale farming, most residents scrape out a living harvesting pine nuts each fall or collecting lumber from the forest to sell in the local market.

The glint of a barbed-wire fence dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan is visible just over the horizon. The border, known as the Durand Line, cuts directly through traditional Pashtun lands and for decades was little more to families divided on either side than a line drawn across the maps of British colonial officers.

The fence itself has been a source of tension between the two countries since Pakistani authorities began its construction in 2019 along the disputed border.

When the Pakistani military launched a sweeping military offensive against militants in 2014, hundreds of thousands of people fled the fighter-bombers pounding Pakistan’s tribal areas and crossed into Afghanistan, seeking shelter with relatives.

Among them were many militants with the Pakistani Taliban, who found refuge among the Taliban. For years, they quietly regrouped amid the threat of American airstrikes and offensives by Western-backed Afghan security forces. But since the Taliban seized power last year, many militants, now able to move freely, have returned to their relatives’ homes along the border, residents say.

Signs of their presence and support abound: Children wear small buttons with pictures of Hakimullah Mehsud, the second emir of the Pakistani Taliban, who was killed in an American drone strike in 2013. The militant group’s flag is hoisted above homes and shops.

And unlike in many other parts of the country, where the Taliban’s security forces have conducted house-to-house sweeps to collect weapons from civilians, these villages are flush with armed men.

But as the signs of Pakistani Taliban militants have grown in recent months, so too has the shelling from Pakistan, residents say. Still, the devastation from the airstrikes on April 16 was unlike anything they had ever experienced.

Around 3 that morning in Kanai village, Rangin, 30, felt his wife nudging him to wake up for suhoor, the pre-dawn meal Muslims eat before the daylong fasts during the holy month of Ramadan. A migrant from North Waziristan in Pakistan, he fled during the military offensive and eventually built a small home on the Afghan hillside where he lived with his wife and four children.

Rangin had told his wife to let him sleep, then the walls and ceiling crashed down on top of them in a deafening boom, he said. Trapped beneath the rubble, his right arm was pressed against his wife’s torso, which swelled and sank as she fought to breathe. Minutes later, two more blasts destroyed a neighbor’s empty home and a shop down the road, killing its 16-year-old shopkeeper.

After a half-hour, Rangin could no longer feel his wife’s chest move. He was eventually rescued, but she was dead, along with his three daughters, ages 1, 3 and 10.

“Why are they bombing us?” he asked, standing in the wreckage of his home. “We are just refugees. This is a cruelty.”

Bits of torn bank notes from the 150,000 Pakistani rupees, roughly \$800, in savings he kept in his home fluttered on the ground around him. Like others interviewed here, he said he had no connection to the Pakistani Taliban.

Around the same time that morning in the nearby village of Mandatah, a blast tore through the front of Qudratullah’s family home. His relative and neighbor Sadamullah, 21, ran to the house with his aunt, uncle and cousin, choking on smoke. He could make out the bodies of children laying on the lawn and red flames engulfing the family’s tractor and pickup truck.

But before Sadamullah could make sense of the scene, another blast hit the back of the house, throwing him on the ground. When he came to, he saw his cousin laying face down on the earth, legs covered in blood. His aunt and uncle were buried beneath the rubble.

“For almost 20 minutes my hands, feet and brain were not working, I lost control,” Sadamullah said.

Six days later, Qudratullah, his brother Zargit, and dozens of their surviving relatives gathered inside a large canvas tent to pray for the family members they had lost. All that was left of their home was a pile of rubble. The grill of their pickup hung from a tree branch, and the skull of a sheep from their herd sat in a puddle. On a hilltop nearby, white flags and 27 piles of stones sat atop a fresh mass grave.

“I lost my home, I lost my family, I lost everything,” said Zargit, 30. “Now I am alone.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 ISIS ‘Beatle’ sentenced to life for murders</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/29/isis-beatle-alexanda-kotey-sentenced-life/9971651260155/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/29/isis-beatle-alexanda-kotey-sentenced-life/9971651260155/</a>
GIST	<p>April 29 (UPI) -- An ISIS member in a terror cell dubbed "the Beatles" was sentenced to life in prison Friday for being involved in the deaths of Americans, Japanese and British citizens in Syria.</p> <p>Alexanda Kotey was sentenced by Alexandria Virginia U.S. District Judge <a href="#">T.S. Ellis</a>. <a href="#">Kotey pleaded guilty</a> in September.</p> <p>Judge Ellis said Kotey's crimes were about <a href="#">the most serious</a> that can be committed.</p> <p>Before he was sentenced, a dozen members of the victims' families gave emotional statements in court directly to Kotey.</p> <p>Another ISIS 'Beatles' member, <a href="#">El Shafee Elsheikh</a>, was convicted in federal court April 14 on eight counts, including four charges of hostage taking that resulted in the deaths of Americans <a href="#">James Foley</a>, Steven Sotloff, Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig.</p> <p>Foley, Sotloff and British citizen David Haines were beheaded and gruesome videos of their murders were released online between August and October 2014. Kassig and Japanese citizens Haruna Ykawa and Kenji Goto were also beheaded.</p> <p>Kotey belonged to a group of British ISIS fighters that also included Elsheikh and Mohamed Emwazi, <a href="#">known as "Jihadi John."</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kotey's lawyers said</a> he most likely will be imprisoned at the federal supermax prison in Florence, Colo. Judge Ellis did not recommend a prison for Kotey, leaving that up to the Bureau of Prisons.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

## Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Climate change impact drinking well water
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/climate-change-is-pushing-toxic-chemicals-into-drinking-wells/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/climate-change-is-pushing-toxic-chemicals-into-drinking-wells/</a>
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — Don Myron is probably best known as the guy who survived one of the deadliest fires in Oregon’s history by sheltering overnight in a river with a patio chair. So there was never any question that Myron would rebuild his home in Oregon’s Santiam Canyon after the house was destroyed in the Labor Day wildfires of 2020.</p> <p>The well Myron shared with nearby homeowners was no longer available, which meant one of his first tasks was to drill his own new source for drinking water.</p> <p>“It’s hard to rebuild without water,” Myron said. “It’s hard to do anything without water. It was a priority.”</p> <p>But with climate change confronting communities across the West, people who rely on wells are at particular risk as wildfires grow in intensity and frequency. Without vegetation, fire-scarred land becomes more susceptible to mudslides that can damage watersheds. Drought can increase the concentration of pathogens and other contaminants in well water. And fires can damage the well equipment and piping, leaching toxic chemicals into drinking water and forcing property owners to consider costly repairs, upgrades and filtering systems even as they rebuild their homes and businesses. Beyond the West, heavier rains and floods threaten well water quality, too.</p> <p>In Oregon, about a quarter of state residents rely on private wells for their water supply, according to the Oregon Health Authority. An estimated 2,000 households that rely on private wells were affected by the Labor Day fires of 2020, which, fueled by severe windstorms, rank among the largest and deadliest fires ever experienced in the state. In response, the state established a free voucher program that pays for people affected by the Labor Day fires to test their well water for some contaminants.</p> <p>Once Myron’s well was drilled and operational, he used the voucher to have the water tested. It was “as clean as could be,” Myron said. “I was pleasantly surprised.”</p> <p>Such testing is increasingly common in Western states. After the 2018 Camp Fire nearly destroyed the town of Paradise in northern California, the Butte County Health Department warned residents that creeks and rivers flowing from fire-affected areas could contain elevated levels of heavy metals such as arsenic, a carcinogen, and lead, a neurotoxin. The fires damaged municipal systems and an estimated 2,438 private wells in what is, for now, the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history.</p> <p>The county also alerted property owners that contaminants could seep into the aquifers tapped by private wells. Butte County not only warned people to test for contaminants, but also advised them to drink pricey bottled water until they knew the full extent of the fire damage to their wells.</p> <p>If a fire burned or damaged the casing or plumbing around a well, officials warned, such breaches could cause bacterial growth, including E. coli, which can cause severe gastrointestinal distress. Heat damage from the fires also can compromise the plastic components of wells, potentially leaching dangerous chemicals into drinking water.</p> <p>Many of the fire-scarred communities of the West now are using guidelines developed in part by researcher Andrew Whelton, an engineering professor at Purdue University and director of the school’s Center for Plumbing Safety. Whelton studies water safety after wildfires, most recently after the Marshall Fire in suburban Boulder, Colorado.</p>



Health departments and state regulators needed a baseline understanding of what they should tell property owners, Whelton said, and in many cases were too overwhelmed by the logistics of disaster management to develop their own.

“The people that were most affected by the contamination, the people that were receiving water that may or may not be contaminated, they may or may not have contaminated plumbing,” Whelton said. “They didn’t have any single authority to go to, to get advice.”

Most of the states that require that private wells be inspected or tested for integrity or water quality only do so when they’re first drilled or when a property changes hands. It’s generally up to an individual homeowner to pay to maintain a well and monitor its water quality.

As a result, few wells are tested regularly. Polling shows that many Americans care deeply about water quality. But despite highly visible water crises, including high lead levels in Flint, Michigan, and scarcity within the Navajo Nation, the quality and safety of drinking water often are taken for granted. People turn on their taps and expect it to be fine.

In Oregon, only about 200 property owners with private wells have sought testing vouchers following the 2020 fires, said Curtis Cude, manager of the Oregon Health Authority’s domestic well safety program. Public health officials expected more people to apply for the vouchers, though they acknowledge that, because repairs can be expensive, wells may be a lower priority for some families.

“One of the things that we were hearing, especially last year, is that people were still buried in ash and debris,” Cude said. “And some of those properties were so extensively damaged that they hadn’t the opportunity to even think about getting their well on line.”

Nationwide, an estimated 40 million people obtain their drinking water from a domestic well, according to estimates by the U.S. Geological Survey. Many of those people are in rural communities not serviced by municipal water systems. In the West, homes with private wells are often in the places most vulnerable to increasingly hot or intense wildfires or the effects of drought.

In states prone to wildfire, water quality remains an existential threat. The burden of sourcing uncontaminated water can be particularly stressful on people who’ve survived a wildfire.

For example, Whelton points to a study of attitudes about water safety, which surveyed 233 households in Butte County, California, after the Camp Fire. More than half of respondents, 54%, self-reported that at least one member in their household had anxiety, stress or depression directly related to securing water, or in connection with water contamination issues. Most people who were surveyed said uncertainty about water and plumbing safety prompted them to alter water use in their homes. About 47% installed in-home water treatment technologies; 85% said they sought out alternate water sources.

Yet well contamination is a problem all over the country, including in places where climate change means more frequent and more intense rain events. In the Midwest, the intensity and frequency of rainstorms has increased since 1901, according to the most recent National Climate Assessment. It’s projected only to get worse. Heavy rains can overwhelm sewer or septic systems, transporting pathogens to the groundwater drawn up by wells.

In 2018, hurricanes Florence and Michael inundated coastal Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas, dumping more than 30 inches of rain in some places. The storms affected as many as 730,000 wells in the region, according to estimates from the National Groundwater Association. In North Carolina, the rains from Florence flooded more than 30 hog lagoons full of pig waste. The overflowing toxic muck from floodwaters can seep into the aquifer or make its way down into wells from flooding at the surface.

In the wake of the storms, North Carolina tested 1,000 private wells, said Wilson Mize, a regional environmental health specialist with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. After Hurricane Florence, 13% of the wells tested were positive for E. coli. Typically, with new wells, only about 3% test

positive for it. The results gave health officials a good indication that floodwater was entering the wells, Mize said. The positive results for E. coli dropped to about 3% after wells were disinfected.

The numbers provided state health officials a baseline for the effects of flood-related pollution on wells, which is a matter of critical public health concern—about 2.4 million people rely on wells for drinking water in the state. Since 2018, North Carolina has developed a program to get information out to people with wells who face heavy rainstorms. In areas with many wells, county officials place door hanger pamphlets with information about how to care for a well before and after a storm.

Along with NASA and a researcher at Northeastern University, North Carolina is developing a well water surveillance and response system. It will create a mapping tool that, after flooding, will pinpoint the areas in the state with private wells. It's aimed at helping the state determine where to emphasize sampling and disinfection after hurricanes, tropical storms and other heavy rains.

In parts of the Midwest, nitrate pollution from fertilizer is especially troublesome after heavy rains, said Scott Laeser, the water program director for Clean Wisconsin, an environmental nonprofit. About a third of Wisconsin residents draw their drinking water from private wells, Laeser said.

About 90% of nitrate contamination comes from manure and commercial fertilizer application. When heavy rainstorms dump water, they wash away the fertilizer on farm fields. Nitrates are especially mobile, and, once rainwater saturates the ground, the compounds quickly descend into the groundwater. Then, the chemicals reemerge in people's well water. Nitrates are most notable for causing what's known as blue baby syndrome, a condition that results in low oxygen levels in the blood.

The threat of well pollution from manure is so severe that the state of Wisconsin operates an online risk advisory forecast to help farmers understand how weather conditions and soil temperatures might exacerbate runoff. It is updated three times a day by the National Weather Service.

Laeser said the conservation work conducted by Clean Wisconsin to prevent runoff has been based on the assumptions of past climate patterns, not a present and future in which major rainstorms are increasingly frequent. The group's conservation measures in the state weren't enough before, he said, but now, they look "increasingly inadequate in the face of the extreme weather challenges that we're facing."

"What we are having to do is kind of toss those out because they aren't relevant anymore," Laeser said. "Places in western and northern Wisconsin are getting 100- and 500-year storms annually or biannually."

Agriculture has the potential to be a big part of climate solutions, Laeser said. Synthetic fertilizer production uses fossil fuels, in particular natural gas. Heavy fertilizer use contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing synthetic fertilizer use helps both the climate and water quality, Laeser said. So does finding ways for farms to be financially resilient and sustainable—including incentivizing growers to set aside wetlands—that don't "solely reward them based on as much cheap food as possible."

"There's a huge opportunity in that we can address so many water and climate challenges simultaneously," Laeser said. "The connections between our water and climate challenges are becoming clearer by the day."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Killeen TX mental health program unveiled?
SOURCE	<a href="https://kdhnews.com/news/local/police-chief-talks-to-seattle-area-about-kpds-new-mental-health-program-but-in-killeen/article_22f6f2d6-c8de-11ec-880c-034fe5e2bdb9.html">https://kdhnews.com/news/local/police-chief-talks-to-seattle-area-about-kpds-new-mental-health-program-but-in-killeen/article_22f6f2d6-c8de-11ec-880c-034fe5e2bdb9.html</a>
GIST	Mystery surrounds Killeen's newest mental health program first unveiled to Washington state residents during the Killeen police chief's Pacific Northwest job search in a series of interviews in April.

During virtual interviews with the King County Sheriff's Department in Seattle on April 18 and 21, KPD Chief Charles Kimble highlighted a new mental health program called "Killeen Cares" to the 2.2 million King County residents, while Killeen residents remained in the dark.

After receiving questions from the Herald, KPD officially told Killeen residents about the program in a news release on Monday announcing a Killeen Cares kickoff event to be held on May 2 with the Killeen NAACP and Texas A&M University-Central Texas.

When asked questions last week about the new program's operations, expectations for police officers, funding, and other basic information, area officials refrained from commenting.

So far publicly, Kimble's job interviews with Seattle-area officials have provided the most insight into the program, which aims to improve interactions between Killeen police and residents with mental health issues, which have proven to be difficult and deadly in the past.

## **INTERVIEW**

In the first King County public forum held via Zoom, part of the interview process for the Washington state sheriff position, Kimble was asked by a resident to give a specific example of success he's had in building more inclusive or equitable programs. View both of Kimble's virtual King County Zoom sessions here: <https://bit.ly/3yjPsDV>.

"One I am probably kicking off — actually I was sending off invites today — one of the programs that I'm working on is called Killeen Cares," Kimble said during the April 18 Zoom King County virtual forum.

Kimble gave King County residents an overview of the new mental health program, a project he said he had worked on for the past nine months with NAACP Killeen president TaNeika Driver-Moultrie following an officer-involved shooting.

In January 2021, Killeen resident Patrick Warren was killed by a KPD police officer while suffering a mental episode outside his home.

Most recently, after three weeks on life support, 27-year-old Killeen resident Ralph "Ralphie" Sebexen died Tuesday from injuries sustained when a KPD officer responding to a disturbance shot him outside a Mickey's convenience store. The Texas Rangers have opened an investigation into the incident.

"I worked with NAACP president and the local LULAC, the organization of the Latino representatives, and some veteran partners, and the Department of Justice Community Outreach, and we said, 'Hey, how can we not have this happen again?' That was our goal," Kimble said during the Zoom interview.

The police chief said the program would allow people to self-identify to KPD either directly or through their medical provider if they have "mental health issues."

"For example, if I self-admit or self-identify that I have a mental health issue, so I have a different response when police come to my home," he said. "I have a card, or a bracelet on me, or it's in the CAD (computer-aided dispatch) system, or I have an identifier on my vehicle that this is a person who has identified they have a mental health issue and they have a different response, a different officer, a more highly trained person — even a civilian service provider."

Later, during King County's April 21 Zoom forum, Kimble specified those who enter the Killeen Cares database would receive a bumper sticker identifying their participation in the program.

## **QUESTIONS**

The Herald was met with resistance when asking questions about the Killeen Cares program.

Addressing NAACP President Driver-Moultrie Friday, the Herald asked when the NAACP chapter began working with KPD on this mental health program, how the organization will be involved with the program

going forward, and whether a signed agreement between the two parties for the Killeen Cares program existed.

“I am at a Conference but would be happy to answer your questions for a better understanding along with other invited media at the kickoff on Monday at 10 a.m.,” Driver-Moultrie responded via email Friday.

The Herald asked the police department why Kimble’s potential future King County employer learned of the mental health program before Killeen knew of its existence, how much the program will cost and how it will be funded, when officers will be provided Killeen Cares training, whether officers were consulted during the creation of this program, why mentally ill residents should trust such a program, and if the Killeen City Council had to approve of Killeen Cares.

In a phone conversation Friday morning about unanswered Killeen Cares questions, KPD spokeswoman Ofelia Miramontez said, “I can tell you now that they’re going to want to discuss all of that at the launch.”

Killeen Mayor Debbie Nash-King did not respond to an emailed request for comment about the new program by deadline Friday. Council members Ken Wilkerson, Jessica Gonzalez, Riakos Adams or Michael Boyd also did not respond.

In questions to City Council members, the Herald asked when they first learned of Killeen Cares, why the program didn’t have to be approved by the council, and what the officials’ general thoughts were about the program.

Councilwoman Mellisa Brown said she first learned of the Killeen Cares program by reading the Herald’s first article about the police chief’s virtual King County town hall.

Brown said she did not know why the new program wasn’t approved by the council.

“I am waiting for answers to some questions before I decide how I feel,” Brown said in an email Friday. “I appreciate the intent and the initiative to foster better interactions between our officers and citizens.”

“Similar programs have been effective in different cities and states,” she said. “Also, similar programs have led to cities and counties being sued. It all depends on how it is administered. I don’t have any more information about the program than the public does at this time.”

Killeen Councilwoman Nina Cobb did not answer the questions directly but provided the following statement.

“I did know of the program and I am thrilled that efforts are being made to improve OUR Community with programs that will help those who suffer from Mental Illness,” Cobb said in an email. “I encourage everyone to listen, attend and learn so we can all be building blocks of the City. ‘A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste!’ We promise constantly to ensure a good quality life in the City of Killeen, we hear you, we see you and we are supporting you.”

### **SOCIAL WORKERS**

Councilman Rick Williams said he learned of the program during the last City Council meeting but did not know why Killeen Cares didn’t have to have the approval of the council.

“I do not know enough about this program to answer this question, appropriately,” Williams said in response to the Herald’s question about his thoughts on the program’s possible effectiveness. “The only briefing that I have received is what was presented to council at the workshop.”

However, it’s not clear if the presentation that was made at the recent council meeting and the Killeen Cares program are one in the same, related or completely different.

At the April 19 Killeen City Council workshop meeting Kerry-Ann Zamore-Byrd, a professor at University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, and Misty Biddick, the executive director of Aware Central Texas, made a presentation to the council about the importance of social workers and how they can help reduce or prevent crime in a city.

“Training and education helps to identify patterns of abuse and mitigate them before they reach physical abuse,” Zamore-Byrd said.

At no time during her presentation, was the term “Killeen Cares” used. Nor were bumper stickers mentioned.

During the meeting, Kimble added his support for social workers working with KPD, and said he’d like to find space in the upcoming budget for it. Council members also voiced support, but said talks would need to continue at a later date before anything is finalized.

How much a social-worker program will cost is also anyone’s guess; Zamore-Byrd said that she was contracted for \$80,000 in 2011 with a bachelor’s degree. However, the cost for a social worker entirely depends on competitive area listings as well as the target level of education.

Having a social-worker program at KPD “would be another tool in our toolbox,” Kimble said during the council meeting. The social worker advocates said they would get back to the council in about 60 days with more details on how such a program would work.

If the social-worker program and “Killeen Cares” are the same thing, officials have not made that clear. A&M-Central Texas — named in last Monday’s news release as working with KPD on the Killeen Cares program — had no comment when questioned about it by the Herald on Friday.

KPD will unveil its Killeen Cares program at 10 a.m. Monday during a launch event held at Texas A&M University — Central Texas in the Bernie Beck Founders Hall.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	04/29 'Deep sea gold rush' irreversible harm?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/29/deep-sea-gold-rush-rare-metals-environmental-harm">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/29/deep-sea-gold-rush-rare-metals-environmental-harm</a>
GIST	<p>In a windowless conference room in Canary Wharf, dozens of mining executives, bankers and government officials are being promised unique insights into how to profit from “the deep-sea gold rush”.</p> <p>The hoped-for gold rush lies thousands of miles away on the bed of the Pacific Ocean, where trillions of potato-sized nodules of rare earth elements vital to power the next generation of electric cars have been discovered 4,000m below the surface.</p> <p>Mining companies are hoping that global rules to allow industrial scale deep-sea mining to collect the haul could be set in place as early as July 2023.</p> <p>However, environmental campaigners warned that <a href="#">mining for the metals would be “dangerous”, “reckless” and cause “irreversible harm”</a> to little-known ecosystems. One estimate suggests that <a href="#">90% of the deep-sea species that researchers encounter are new to science</a>.</p> <p>Louisa Casson, a Greenpeace campaigner, criticised the industry for running the conference and banks for considering investing in the “dangerous and unnecessary” projects to “make a quick profit”.</p> <p>“This destructive new industry wants to rip up an ecosystem we are only just starting to understand,” she said. “[They are] aiming to make a quick profit while our oceans and the billions of people relying on them bear the costs.”</p>

The nodules in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone between Hawaii and Mexico were [first discovered by the crew of HMS Challenger in 1875](#), but only recent developments in underwater robotics have made large-scale mining of the metals possible.

The UN-affiliated organisation that oversees the controversial new industry has granted licenses for companies to explore the area, but full-scale mining has yet to start. That could soon change, however, as the tiny Pacific island nation of Nauru [has triggered a “two-year rule”](#), giving the International Seabed Authority (ISA) two years to implement regulations governing the industry. That set a deadline for a roadmap to be adopted by 9 July 2023.

“Deep-sea gold rush is a gamechanger,” read adverts for the Deep Sea Mining Summit 2022 at the Hilton London hotel in the capital’s Canary Wharf district, for which delegates paid £1,195 for the two-day event this week. “After years of negotiations and false starts, deep-sea mining is close to a breakthrough.

“As we move into an era of mining the deep-ocean floor, the world’s most remote environment, mining companies are working on overcoming the perceived challenges and developing island nations are watching with interest. As the demand for base metals and minerals surges ever beyond what our land is able to provide, new technological and technical developments are helping to drive forward this new industry.”

Daniel Wilde, economic adviser on oceans for the Commonwealth Secretariat, which represents Nauru and many of the other small island states keen to start seabed mining, told the conference that he expected the ISA to agree a payment regime that would hand mining companies a post-tax profit of 17.5%.

However, he warned the audience that “the two-year deadline does seem quite tight, [and] if it’s not agreed there are questions about what happens next”.

Ebbe Hartz, a geologist at Aker BP, a Norwegian oil exploration company part-owned by BP, said mining for seabed metals could eventually overtake drilling for oil. “But the problem is going to be finding [the metals], and we don’t have a lot of data.”

Hartz said machine-learning data collection would be key to the success of seabed mining, and would ensure “we don’t need to make all the errors we made with hydrocarbons”.

Eleanor Martin, a partner at law firm Norton Rose Fulbright who advises banks on financing offshore projects, said global banks were “very eager” to invest in deep-sea mining projects as they project the cost of lithium and cobalt needed for electric car batteries will continue to spiral upwards. “To build the number of [electric] cars we will need, we will need much more of these metals.”

“Banks are sitting on pots of green money,” she said in reference to money designated for projects aimed at tackling the climate crisis. “But they need to know that mining projects are green and sustainable.”

Katherine Reece Thomas, an associate law professor and director of public international law at City, University of London, warned the industry that it needed to do more to win over public opinion before planning to start mining the oceans.

“There is an impossible conflict between those who say we can’t possibly do this, to others who say we need to take this stuff in order to tackle climate change on earth,” she said.

Jessica Battle, who runs the WWF’s No Deep Seabed Mining campaign, said: “Deep-seabed mining is highly risky and will cause irreversible harm to the ocean, to its life and its ability to help mitigate climate change. Investing in such a highly unsustainable industry at a time when we need to reduce our footprint on the natural world is irresponsible.

“Any short-term incentives offered are far outweighed by the long-term benefits of a healthy ocean and so WWF and others are calling for a global moratorium on deep seabed mining. Alternative solutions already



	<p>exist – innovation, recycling and repair can satisfy industries’ need for raw materials without opening the seafloor to mining.”</p> <p>Casson, from Greenpeace, said: “There is absolutely no need to mine the deep oceans and cause further harm to our planet. We’ve been pleased to see the biggest players in the electric car and technology sectors, including Microsoft, Google, Volvo, BMW and Samsung, all call out the greenwash of the deep-sea mining companies and commit not to use deep-sea mined minerals in their products.</p> <p>“This nascent industry should stop before it even begins. We need to transition towards a more circular economy, in which we waste less and reuse more, instead of trying to destroy one of our planet’s last great wildernesses at the bottom of our oceans in the name of profit.”</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

## Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Crackdown on repeat retail theft offenders</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-king-county-crack-down-thieves-committing-repeat-retail-thefts/XCIZIDAODVE4VD74AC22Z6CXZII/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-king-county-crack-down-thieves-committing-repeat-retail-thefts/XCIZIDAODVE4VD74AC22Z6CXZII/</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — The Seattle City Attorney’s Office with the King County Prosecutor’s Office is cracking down on people who commit repeat retail thefts.</p> <p>The news comes as the Seattle Police Department continues to conduct undercover operations to fight the rising problem, which is costing stores like Lowe’s, Home Depot, and Target lots of money.</p> <p>Just last week, both offices discussed the issue of repeat retail thefts in Seattle and decided to combine some of their cases in the hopes of getting a full understanding of a person’s repeat offender’s criminal history.</p> <p>The county prosecutor’s office told KIRO 7 that repeat retail offenders are being charged daily.</p> <p>“To the folks that say what’s being done, we’re frustrated with it too. We don’t like seeing people rip off stores at Bartell’s and Walgreens. And you know, we don’t want businesses to leave Seattle, we have been working on this. We’ve been identifying these high-profile offenders for years. And now that we have this really excellent partnership with the city attorney’s office, people can be reassured that we’re going to keep paying attention,” said Casey McNerthney with the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office.</p> <p>The county prosecutor’s office said cracking down on repeat retail offenders requires collaboration by everyone to catch thieves, such as a man who had been accused of committing numerous misdemeanors for stealing alcohol from a Target in the Seattle area.</p> <p>Police said he would often steal from the same store twice a day.</p> <p>Instead of being charged with a misdemeanor, that man was charged with second-degree organized retail theft, which is a felony.</p> <p>“What’s frustrating is people can steal a cartload of items, five to six hundred dollars or more worth of goods, and that’s still a misdemeanor offense. But now, that we’re working with the city attorney’s office, even more closely than we have before, those cases are also being aggregated too,” McNerthney said.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison announced the “High Utilizer Initiative,” which pulls together resources from several city and county agencies to keep repeat offenders in custody and get them the help they need.</p>

	<p>The initiative has found that 118 people were responsible for more than 2,400 criminal cases in the past five years.</p> <p>Critics have criticized Davison's initiative as a recycled idea that does more harm than good, and supporters said the status quo continues to fail both victims and those arrested.</p> <p>In the past several months, tens of thousands of dollars have been stolen off Seattle store shelves.</p> <p>It is not just King County dealing with the problem. It is happening in other counties like Snohomish, where a person who was stealing clothes from a Lynnwood Nordstrom, punched a security guard while making their escape with \$800 worth of stolen merchandise.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/01 Courts mostly not using Tiffany Hill Act law</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260910992.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260910992.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>In April 2020, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed the Tiffany Hill Act into law, named after a Vancouver mother who was murdered by her estranged, abusive husband.</p> <p>The law allows courts to order people accused of domestic violence to wear GPS ankle devices, which can be monitored by officials and linked to an app on the victim's phone, alerting them when the offender is nearby.</p> <p>Two years later, most Washington courts are not utilizing that option.</p> <p>In September 2019, Tiffany Hill's husband Keland Hill was arrested after pushing her into a wall and trying to prevent her from calling 911. He was released from jail the next day and told not to contact Tiffany, but Keland violated the no-contact order several times in the months following his arrest.</p> <p>In November 2019, detectives found a GPS tracker on Tiffany's car and Keland was arrested again. Investigators determined Tiffany was in extreme danger and requested Keland be held on \$2 million bail, but a judge set it at only \$250,000.</p> <p>He bailed out of jail on Nov. 21, 2019. Five days later, he shot and killed Tiffany in front of her three children and her mother in the parking lot of Sarah J. Anderson Elementary, where her kids went to school.</p> <p>Hill then led deputies on a chase and took his own life.</p> <p>Tiffany's loved ones said technology allowing her to track her abuser's location could have saved her life, and others like her, had it been available.</p> <p>In November 2021, KGW reached out to all 39 counties in Washington, asking prosecuting attorneys and courts how many times they had ordered the use of these tracking devices — and received responses from fewer than half.</p> <p>Of the counties that did respond, almost none are utilizing the law. The exception is Clark County, where the law originated, which has more than a dozen offenders being monitored.</p> <p>When asked why they aren't ordering this monitoring, most counties said cost was the biggest barrier. The offender in a domestic violence case has to foot the bill for the monitoring, which can cost up to \$20 a day. Many courts are apprehensive to order it if a defendant can't afford it.</p> <p>Some courts cited a lack of access to vendors, especially in more rural parts of the state, but there are five approved vendors that say they do cover the entire state of Washington.</p> <p>Some jurisdictions said they were unaware a law had even been passed.</p>

Multiple prosecutors said they would like to see GPS technology being issued, but judges in their jurisdiction are just not ordering it.

Six months later, little had changed when KGW followed up with prosecutors in counties that had not been ordering GPS tracking — in those counties, there had been no new cases where the courts had ordered monitoring under the Tiffany Hill Act.

At a time when domestic violence advocates say they're seeing more people seeking help from abusive situations, this is concerning.

"In some places, data looks like it's going down because people haven't been able to access services, they haven't been recording. They haven't been calling for help," Elizabeth Montoya with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence told KGW. "And in other communities we're seeing numbers way, way up. What I hear anecdotally from programs throughout our state is that the levels of violence that folks experience are increasing due to a number of factors... stressors in the home, economic instability, crises like this just kind of create a perfect storm for violence to escalate."

Montoya said these tools are great in theory, but there needs to be forethought and follow-through when it comes to putting it into practice.

"It doesn't surprise me that it has not been implemented, but only because we know that it's a struggle to get these things implemented. That's something that we're always kind of thinking about as these kinds of laws move through the legislature," Montoya said. "There are so many really important and really good ideas out there to address domestic violence and to respond to it effectively. But we also really have to think about, what is implementation going look like?"

Washington state Sen. Lynda Wilson, who represents Southwest Washington in the legislature, is a survivor of domestic abuse and originally sponsored the Tiffany Hill Act. After KGW reached out for her perspective on how little the law was being used, Wilson secured \$2 million from the state's \$15 billion budget surplus to be allocated to help counties order GPS monitoring of accused abusers. The money would help offset the cost in case where offenders can't afford to pay the cost themselves.

"I don't want money to interfere, to be a reason why someone is not able to get to the monitoring," Wilson said. "We know that in this case, because of Tiffany Hill, we feel quite confident that she would've lived if she had this. And I hear from women all the time and I know how important this is. I don't want money to get in the way, so I just continued to ask for it. We had a healthy budget this year, so we were able to do it."

Wilson said King County, the largest in Washington, has taken steps to begin using the tracking and victim notification software. She hopes as they start to use it, it will spur discussions with judges and prosecutors in other counties.

"I'm very thankful that Clark County was the first to implement it because they're actually doing such a great job with it that other counties can learn from that," Wilson said. "I would like to figure out a way to get that information out there."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Virginia youth sports field shooting; 3 hurt
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/3rd-shooting-youth-sports-field-days-leaves-hurt/story?id=84428964">https://abcnews.go.com/US/3rd-shooting-youth-sports-field-days-leaves-hurt/story?id=84428964</a>
GIST	At least three people were injured Sunday when <a href="#">gunfire erupted</a> near a middle school athletic field in Virginia, marking the third time in seven days that a shooting has occurred near youth sports facilities across the country.

The latest [incident unfolded Sunday](#) morning near Benton Middle School in Manassas, Virginia, about 30 miles southwest of Alexandria, according to the Prince William County Police Department.

Police said a youth flag football game was going on when the gunfire erupted. The circumstances of the shooting are under investigation.

Three gunshot victims were taken to area hospitals, but their ages and conditions were not immediately released.

No arrests were reported, but police said officers had secured the scene.

Prince William County Supervisor Yesli Vega released a statement on Facebook saying her office was monitoring the situation closely.

"For those who reside near Benton Middle School, please stay in your homes until we have further updates," Vega said in her statement.

The shooting came just three days after nearly two dozen shots were fired near a high school baseball game in Chicago, prompting players on the field to drop to the ground and others to dive for cover. The shooting occurred just after 5 p.m. on Friday during a freshman baseball game between St. Rita High School and Marmion Academy.

No one was injured in that shooting, and police said they suspect the gunfire came from a McDonald's across the street from the athletic field where gunmen were firing at a moving car, according to the Chicago Police Department.

On April 25, a barrage of gunfire interrupted a youth league baseball game in North Charleston, South Carolina. Dozens of shots were fired near Pepperhill Park, police said.

Cell phone video showed players on the field diving to the ground and their teammates, coaches and spectators seeking cover.

The North Charleston Police said no one was injured in the shooting. No arrests have been made.

North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey announced a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrests of those responsible for the shooting.

"It destroyed the hearts of a lot of people: mothers, fathers, children out here participating in sports within our city," Summey said at a news conference last week. "We will not tolerate this behavior, and we will not allow this behavior to carry forward."

Gun violence prevention organization Everytown released a report last year showing that between Aug. 20 and Sept. 25, 2021, at least 22 incidents involving guns occurred at football games, soccer matches and Little League games in 14 states. Some incidents turned deadly, including a college football game in Durham, North Carolina, on Sept. 18, where police said two people were fatally shot.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Portland: gunfire erupts amid truck convoy
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/police-investigate-after-gunfire-erupts-during-heated-peoples-convoy-confrontation-in-portland?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/police-investigate-after-gunfire-erupts-during-heated-peoples-convoy-confrontation-in-portland?ref=home</a>
GIST	Police are investigating a shooting that took place on Friday evening as the so-called " <a href="#">People's Convoy</a> " made its way north into the Portland, Oregon, area after spending time protesting and <a href="#">getting eggs tossed at them</a> in California.

The incident occurred on a highway overpass near Portland's city limits, where counter-demonstrations to the anti-COVID-19 mandate convoy had gathered above the freeway.

"At 6:54 p.m., North Precinct and East Precinct officers responded to a report of a group throwing objects off the Northeast Glisan Street overpass over Interstate 205, and that a shot had been fired," Portland Police [said](#) in a public statement.

Video footage taken by the convoy shows one of their members reaching for what appears to be a firearm on his belt before gunfire rings out.

Police investigators added that they had "determined that the shot fired call was likely related" to the confrontation between the parties and did "recover evidence of one shot fired."

"Several officers were required as a group of about 15 people were yelling at and harassing the officers as they conducted the investigation," the statement concluded, without specifying which party was yelling at the officers. "No immediate arrests were made, but the investigation is continuing."

Neither Portland Police nor convoy leadership returned The Daily Beast's request for comment.

It is illegal to [discharge](#) a firearm in Portland unless the individual who fired the round was partaking in the "defense of person or property."

This isn't the first time The People's Convoy, [which recently parted ways with its leader](#), has caught the attention of law enforcement in their gas-guzzling travels.

The group left the Washington, D.C. area with two ongoing investigations into their convoy related to two separate incidents. One pertains to a convoy [member allegedly striking a woman with his car](#) and another involves claims that [convoy-goers assaulted a motorbike rider](#).

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Manhunt: Alabama prison official, inmate
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-murder-suspect-escaped-alabama-jail/story?id=84426342">https://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-murder-suspect-escaped-alabama-jail/story?id=84426342</a>
GIST	<p>Multiple law enforcement agencies are continuing their search for a murder suspect who escaped an Alabama jail by apparently feigning a trip to the courthouse with a corrections officer, according to authorities.</p> <p>Vicki White, the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Office assistant director, was last seen escorting inmate Casey White to the local courthouse on Friday morning for an "alleged mental health evaluation," Sheriff Rick Singleton told reporters on Saturday. The two are not related, the sheriff said.</p> <p>Casey White, 38, was arrested in 2020 and charged with two counts of capital murder that authorities said was a murder for hire in a case that went cold for nearly five years, <a href="#">AL.com</a> reported at the time.</p> <p>"Indications are" that Vicki White, who has worked for the sheriff's office for 25 years, assisted in the escape, but it is unclear whether she did so willingly or if Casey White coerced her into doing so "by threatening her and/or her family or other means," the sheriff's office said in a statement.</p> <p>Investigators are searching for any footage that can shed light on what happened and are also combing through Casey White's phone calls and looking into the previous interactions between him and Vicki White to determine whether the escape was premeditated, Singleton said.</p> <p>Here is a timeline of events, according to the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p><b>Friday, April 29</b> <b>8:47 a.m.:</b> Transport van No. 5 leaves the detention center with seven inmates, escorted by two deputies.</p>

**8:56 a.m.:** Transport van No. 2 leaves the detention center with five inmates, escorted by two deputies.

**9:20 a.m.** Vicki White instructs a corrections deputy to prepare Casey White for transport to the courthouse. The deputy then removes Casey White from his jail cell and takes him to booking, where the deputy places him in handcuffs and shackles his legs.

**9:41 a.m.:** Vicki White leaves the detention center with Casey White in a patrol car for an inmate "mental health evaluation." Prior to leaving, Vicki White tells the booking officer that she is the only deputy available who is firearm certified and that she is dropping him off to other deputies at the courthouse and would then be going to Med Plus, an urgent care center, because she is not feeling well.

**11:34 a.m.:** A police officer with the Florence Police Department, unaware of the situation at the time, spots the patrol vehicle in a parking lot near cars that are for sale.

**3:30 p.m.:** A booking officer reports to detention center administration that they have been trying to contact Vicki White to check on her but that her phone is going directly to voicemail. The booking officer also advises that inmate Casey White has not returned to the detention center with the other inmates.

The administrator contacts the sheriff's office, and officers begin a search of the courthouse to determine whether Casey White is still in the building. Over the next several minutes, they determine that Casey White was not in the courthouse and that there was not a court appearance or evaluation scheduled. Security footage shows that Vicki White never arrived at the courthouse.

After a national bulletin is released with details of Casey White and Vicki White, a witness reports that she saw the patrol vehicle on her lunch break at a shopping center. Deputies retrieve the patrol car but do not find any information on their whereabouts.

**5:30 p.m.:** About 20 agents from the U.S. Marshals, the FBI, the ATF, the Secret Service and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency join the investigation.

### **Saturday, April 30**

**Morning:** The son of Connie Ridgeway, the woman Casey White is accused of killing, tells ABC Huntsville, Alabama, affiliate station [WAAY](#) that he is in disbelief his mother's accused killer is on the loose.

"I'm shocked," Austin Williams told the station after Casey White had been on the run for at least 24 hours. "I mean, how is that even possible that someone with that rap sheet got out that easily?"

Singleton announces during a press conference that it was a "strict violation of policy" for Vicki White to be alone with an inmate, adding that Casey White should have been escorted by two deputies, given his charges.

In her role as assistant director of corrections, Vicki White is in charge of coordinating transportation between the detention center and the court, Singleton said. The breach of protocol wasn't flagged by her employees.

**Evening:** Singleton tells ABC News that it appears the escape was "orchestrated."

Casey White previously planned to escape from the Lauderdale County Detention Center in the fall of 2020, but officials thwarted the plot before he could attempt it, Singleton said. When prison officials got word of the plot, they found a homemade knife in White's possession and learned that he was planning to take a hostage.

Casey White was subsequently transferred to a state prison, where he remained until early this year, and would return to the Lauderdale County facility for court appearances related to the murder, Singleton said.



Vicki White is "an exemplary employee" who is well-liked by all her colleagues, Singleton said. She interacts with inmates several times a day as part of her job, Singleton said, adding that he is unaware of any kind of relationship between Vicki White and Casey White.

"We're very concerned for her safety," he said.

### **Sunday, May 1**

**Morning:** The U.S. Marshals Service announces a reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the capture for Casey White.

"Casey White is believed to be a serious threat to the corrections officer and the public," U.S. Marshal Marty Keely said in a statement.

**Afternoon:** Singleton tells ABC News that Vicki White had been talking about retiring for three or four months prior to the escape. She turned in her paperwork on Thursday, and Friday, when the escape occurred, was set to be her last day at work.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Autopsy backlog plagues Mississippi</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/autopsy-backlog-plagues-mississippi-with-worst-delays-in-us/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/autopsy-backlog-plagues-mississippi-with-worst-delays-in-us/</a>
GIST	<p>JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — After Truitt Pace admitted to law enforcement that he beat and shot his wife, her family expected a swift conviction. The 34-year-old mother of three's tiny frame was so bruised and traumatized that the funeral home suggested a closed casket. But as months went by, state prosecutors told Marsha Harbour's family they were waiting on a key piece of evidence: the medical examiner's autopsy report.</p> <p>National standards recommend most autopsy reports be completed within 60 days. Prosecutors in Harbour's case waited for a year.</p> <p>Across Mississippi, many families wait even longer. An Associated Press analysis based on state data and documents, as well as dozens of interviews with officials and residents, found that Mississippi's system has long operated in violation of national standards for death investigations, accruing a severe backlog of autopsies and reports.</p> <p>Autopsies that should take days take weeks. Autopsy reports that should take months take a year or longer, as in Harbour's case. Too few pathologists are doing too many autopsies. Some cases are transferred hundreds of miles to neighboring states for reports without their family's knowledge.</p> <p>The Mississippi State Medical Examiner's Office was waiting for about 1,300 reports from as far back as 2011, records sent to AP in early April show. Around 800 of those involve homicides — meaning criminal cases are incomplete.</p> <p>District attorneys have resigned themselves to long waits: "We're at a point now where we're happy if it's only a year," said Luke Williamson, who's been a prosecutor for 14 years in northern Mississippi.</p> <p>The National Association of Medical Examiners, the office that accredits U.S. death investigations offices, dictates that 90% of autopsy reports should be returned within 60 to 90 days.</p> <p>Mississippi's office has never been accredited. The majority of U.S. medical examiner agencies, which are chronically underfunded and face a shortage of forensic pathologists, are unaccredited. States such as Georgia have raised the alarm about autopsy report delays of up to six months. But nowhere is the issue more severe than in Mississippi.</p>

Mississippi's delays are an "emergency-level" concern, said Dr. James Gill, the association's 2021 president and a leader in the College of American Pathologists. "That's a disaster situation where you need to do something drastic."

Public Safety Commissioner Sean Tindell is a former Mississippi Court of Appeals judge who stepped into his role — overseeing the state medical examiner's office, the highway patrol and other agencies — in May 2020. He called the backlog "unacceptable" and said he's made eliminating it the top priority of his administration. He said working as a judge, he saw how trials were delayed while prosecutors awaited reports.

"I knew it was bad," he told the AP. "I didn't know it was this bad."

"Families deserve better. I'm sorry that they've had to experience delays in laying to rest loved ones, to getting closure in these cases, but we're going to fix the problem."

Tindell said he's instituted a policy that all reports must be back within 90 days. Using contractor pathologists in other states, the office began working to whittle down the backlog. Tindell said around 500 cases have been completed since summer.

But Tindell — who has hired two new pathologists, started university recruiting efforts and streamlined staff duties — said it's been a challenge trying to fix old problems while facing new ones: the pandemic and an unprecedented increase in violent crime.

Mississippi saw 597 homicides in 2021 and 578 in 2020 — record numbers for the state of 3 million. That's compared with 434 in 2019 and 382 in 2018.

Arkansas, with a similar population, had 347 homicides in 2021 and 386 in 2020.

From 2020 to April 2022, Arkansas has employed five to seven pathologists performing autopsies. Mississippi has employed two to three, as people left jobs.

Tindell said both the forensics laboratory and medical examiner's office haven't been a state priority for funding or staffing in over a decade. The forensic laboratory's budget has essentially remained unchanged since 2008.

But during Mississippi's 2022 legislative session, lawmakers approved \$4 million that must be used to address backlogged cases.

Like most states, Mississippi does not perform an autopsy — a post-mortem surgical procedure by a forensic pathologist to determine cause of death — for all people. Autopsies are reserved for homicides, suicides, deaths of children and those in correctional facilities, and other unexpected cases. Forensic pathologists are responsible for performing autopsies at Mississippi's two medical examiner offices — one in the Jackson metro area, one on the coast.

After the autopsy, pathologists complete a report explaining their findings and results, including an official cause of death. Reports can help determine whether a death was an accident, a suicide or a homicide. They shed light on child deaths, or show whether a person accused of murder acted in self-defense.

In 2017, 93-year-old World War II veteran Durley Bratton died after two employees of a Mississippi veterans home dropped him and put him back in bed without telling anyone. Police began an investigation after a tip from the hospital where Bratton was taken.

Arrests didn't come until 15 months later, after the autopsy report was returned, concluding the veteran died of blunt-force trauma.

In the Harbour case, the autopsy report was the critical piece of evidence after Pace claimed self-defense for shooting his wife.

At the December 2021 trial where Pace was sentenced to life in prison, a medical examiner said Harbour suffered from blunt force trauma wounds consistent with being beaten before she was shot.

Harbour, who helped deliver babies as a surgical technician at a local hospital, had endured months of abuse. She once went to a domestic violence shelter. But she worried for her children's safety and never went to the police.

Because Pace had no criminal record, he was released on bond days after his arrest.

Harbour's stepmother, Denise Spears, said she and her family felt dejected as they went to the mailbox month after month to find notices that the trial was being pushed back. Once the report came in, the trial was delayed further because of the pandemic. Pace didn't stand trial until more than three years after killing his wife.

One of the worst parts was explaining to her grandchildren why the man who killed their mother was able to live free for years, Spears said. More than once, they came to her, afraid they'd run into him.

"They couldn't understand it," Spears said. "It was hard for me to explain to them, because I couldn't understand it either."

Ben Creekmore, a district attorney in northern Mississippi, said conversations with families about delays are always difficult. He worries about the impact the postponements have on trust in the criminal justice system.

"Those things dramatically impact our relationship with people who have suffered loss," he said. "It undermines your credibility on everything else."

Beyond effects on criminal cases, the lack of an autopsy report and official death certificate can prevent families from collecting benefits.

Mississippi Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann said he's been contacted by families who can't get insurance payouts without a certificate.

"One that contacted us was a mom and two children whose husband died unexpectedly," he said during a fall budget hearing. "They couldn't get their life insurance benefits, and that's the only money they had."

More than money, families can also find closure. Rebecca Brown lost her brother unexpectedly in 2018. It wasn't until last June — three years after his death — that his report was completed.

Her brother, in his early 40s, had a history of drug addiction but was in recovery. He lived with his mother, who worried he'd started using again and had died of an overdose. When they finally learned the cause of death was a heart attack, Brown said she felt no relief — just anger that it had taken so long. When she showed her mother a photo of the death certificate, she cried.

"In my mind, what they did is they called for my mother to grieve harder for three years than she could have," Brown said.

Tindell said the problems won't be fixed until the state is able to hire more pathologists. The National Medical Examiners Association standards recommend that pathologists perform no more than 250 autopsies a year. If pathologists perform more than 325 a year, the office risks losing accreditation.

In 2021, two Mississippi pathologists performed 461 and 421 autopsies. Arkansas's six pathologists completed an average of approximately 282 each.

During most of the 1990s and 2000s, Mississippi had no state medical examiner, instead contracting with a private physician, Dr. Steven Hayne, who performed 80% of autopsies in the state. He completed as many as 1,700 autopsies a year.

Hayne's work was repeatedly attacked in court as sloppy and scientifically unsound. Verdicts in multiple murder cases in which Hayne testified were overturned by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

In 2011, the state hired Pathologist Dr. Mark LeVaughn as its first chief medical examiner since 1995. During his tenure, LeVaughn spoke publicly repeatedly about a lack of resources, calling his office a critically understaffed public health risk.

Tindell said a substantial number of autopsy reports that are pending are LeVaughn's. Because of the department's staff turnover rate, LeVaughn was the only forensic pathologist handling all the autopsies in the state at times and fell behind on paperwork.

"He was put in the impossible situation of trying to do all the autopsies for the entire state, and just unfortunately, he was not able to get it all done," Tindell said.

LeVaughn resigned as chief medical examiner in January 2021. He has since been rehired as a pathologist finishing outstanding reports and testifying on them in trials.

Tindell said the office expects an additional pathologist to start late next month, and that he's recruiting to hire another as soon as possible.

In the meantime, to meet demand, the Mississippi Medical Examiner's Office has been forced to send bodies to neighboring states such as Arkansas. In 2021, 284 autopsies were completed by contractor pathologists.

The National Medical Examiner's Association recommends autopsies be completed within 72 hours. The turnaround time in Mississippi has exceeded three weeks in some cases. The problem is especially severe in north Mississippi, where there is no medical examiner's office.

One family in Tupelo waited 24 days. After he was shot and killed in May of last year, Lorenzin Brown's body was first brought almost 200 miles (322 kilometers) away for an autopsy at the Mississippi State Crime Lab in Pearl, the closest state facility that could do it.

Brown lay for two weeks in the morgue before pathologists determined they couldn't get to his case fast enough. They decided he should be transferred to Little Rock — more than 260 miles (418 kilometers) away — for an autopsy by a contractor.

His family wasn't notified that he was being transferred or told when he'd be returned. Without updates, they struggled to make funeral arrangements. His father wondered if he'd be able to see him before he was buried.

"To get a call saying that he's been murdered, it was already a tragic enough situation," said Brown's uncle, Tim Butler, a pastor who organized the funeral. "The grieving process is always bad. Under these circumstances, it's made everything that much worse."

His mother, Geisha, said she couldn't work while she waited for his body to be returned and to hold his service. It wasn't until a month and a day after he died that they were able to bury her son.

Clayton Cobler — coroner in Lauderdale County, where Harbour was killed — said families try calling the medical examiner's office for answers about the status of autopsies and reports, and they often don't hear back. Each of Mississippi's 82 counties has an elected coroner who's responsible for collecting and

	<p>transporting bodies to the medical examiner's office. They end up acting as liaisons with families and answering desperate calls month after month, Cobler said.</p> <p>"I've got a grandmother that her grandson died in 2017, and she wants to know why," he said. "It just breaks my heart every time she calls, because I can't tell her."</p> <p>Cobler, who has worked in death investigations for decades, said he recently made the difficult decision not to run for reelection.</p> <p>"More and more coroners or long-term coroners are saying, 'I'm done. I'm not going to run again, because it's just too frustrating, and it's too heartbreaking,'" he said.</p> <p>Rocky Kennedy, the Lafayette County coroner, said many people who work with families feel the same fatigue.</p> <p>"It's a waiting game, and I think everybody's patience ran out a long time ago," he said. "Words without results mean nothing."</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Hamas warns of global synagogue attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220430-hamas-warns-of-synagogue-attacks-in-case-of-new-al-aqsa-raid">https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220430-hamas-warns-of-synagogue-attacks-in-case-of-new-al-aqsa-raid</a>
GIST	<p><i>Gaza City (Palestinian Territories) (AFP)</i> – The Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas warned Saturday of attacks on synagogues if Israeli forces carry out another raid on the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque in annexed east Jerusalem.</p> <p>"Whoever takes the decision to repeat this scene (of a deployment inside the mosque) will be taking the decision to destroy thousands of synagogues across the world," Yahya Sinwar, Hamas chief in the Gaza Strip, said in a speech.</p> <p>Israeli police have over the past two weeks clashed repeatedly with Palestinian protesters at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, with footage showing them firing tear gas inside the mosque, sparking condemnation from across the Muslim world.</p> <p>"You should be ready for a great battle if the (Israeli) occupation does not stop attacking Al-Aqsa mosque," said Sinwar.</p> <p>He said Hamas would fire off hundreds of rockets at Israel in case of an act of "aggression" on Al-Aqsa at the end of May, when Israel marks its capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.</p> <p>Violence in east Jerusalem has raised fears of another armed conflict similar to an 11-day war last year between Israel and Hamas, triggered in part by similar unrest at Al-Aqsa.</p> <p>The latest Al-Aqsa violence brought to nearly 300 the number of Palestinians wounded in clashes at the site.</p> <p>The Al-Aqsa compound is the holiest place in Judaism, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, and the third-holiest in Islam.</p> <p>Palestinian Muslims have been angered by an uptick in Jewish visits to the compound, where by long-standing convention Jews may visit but are not allowed to pray.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a>

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukraine officials: Russia seizing grain</b>
----------	--

SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/30/ukraine-accuses-russia-seizing-grain/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/30/ukraine-accuses-russia-seizing-grain/</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian officials on Saturday accused Russian forces of seizing grain in contested regions of Ukraine as fears of a looming food security crisis linger amid the ongoing war.</p> <p>Together, Russia and Ukraine account for nearly a third of the world's wheat exports, and western officials fear exports could fall precipitously below pre-invasion levels.</p> <p>"Today, there are confirmed facts that several hundred thousand tons of grain in total were taken out of the Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk regions," Ukraine's Deputy Agriculture Minister Taras Vysotsky told Ukrainian television on Saturday.</p> <p>With a global economy already battered by pandemic-related supply chain constraints, the war in Ukraine has led to even sharper increases in food costs stemming from disruptions in wheat and fertilizer export markets.</p> <p>In March, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) projected that wheat exports from the two countries will fall by 7 million tons or 12% below pre-invasion projections. As a result, wheat prices have surged globally, up 62% from January through late March, according to the Atlantic Council.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>05/01 Stolen mail scheme targets D.C. suburb</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/05/01/chevy-chase-mailbox-stolen-checks/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/05/01/chevy-chase-mailbox-stolen-checks/</a>
GIST	<p>In January, Steve Rosen dropped a check to the Internal Revenue Service in a blue mailbox a block from his home in the affluent D.C. suburb of Chevy Chase, Md. About two weeks later, his bank called him to alert him to fraud. Someone had stolen his check and rewritten it for \$13,000.22.</p> <p>The 59-year-old lawyer immediately filed a report online with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service but says he never heard back from them.</p> <p>"The real horror was, after it happened the first time, I got a whole new bank account, new checks; a month later, I thought this couldn't happen again," he said.</p> <p>Rosen put the second check — for his tree-care service — into the same U.S. Postal Service mailbox. When he called to ask whether the business had received his payment, it hadn't. So, he kept an eye on his bank account and again found out that someone had tried to swindle him. That check was repurposed and written out to someone for \$2,500.</p> <p>This time, Rosen didn't bother with the Postal Inspection Service and instead contacted police in Montgomery County. He was told by the officer taking his report: "Yeah, we've had a lot of this going on. You're not the only one."</p> <p>During the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a massive spike in checks being stolen from the mail across the United States and used in financial fraud, authorities and researchers say. In March, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service alerted the Justice Department.</p> <p>The stolen checks trend is linked to a "significant increase" in armed robberies of USPS letter carriers to steal arrow keys, which can open most mailboxes across an entire Zip code, according to a U.S. Postal Inspection Service advisory to the Justice Department. In some cases, one Zip code can encompass an entire city. The primary motive behind these robberies, the March 7 advisory said, is financial theft: "Criminals are stealing mail ... to obtain checks, financial instruments, and personal identifying information to commit bank fraud, mail fraud, wire fraud and identity theft."</p> <p>Authorities say mail theft has long been a problem, but the use of stolen arrow keys to target USPS mailboxes is new. Law enforcement officials say it's not immediately clear why such thefts have increased.</p>



Georgia State University's [Evidence-Based Cybersecurity Research Group](#) has spent the past two years collecting evidence across the Internet of checks stolen from the mail and said this type of crime has spread dramatically over the past three to four months.

Poring over platforms used to sell stolen checks including Telegram, ICQ and WhatsApp, the team of 15 — a professor working with graduate and undergraduate students — first spotted the crime in Florida, California, Texas and New York. Then it started to spread across the country, with the D.C. region recently becoming a new hot spot.

On these platforms, the team spotted about 24 checks from Maryland in October, 98 in December and 431 in January. They've seen a similar trend for D.C.: 12 checks in October, nine in December, then 82 in January. They say that, in the absence of law enforcement and attention to this issue, they expect these numbers to rise.

In a video interview, one of the group's researchers showed The Washington Post several photos of checks stolen from individuals and businesses.

"They have amazing technology," said the researcher, who spoke on the condition of anonymity after receiving threats. "We see some of their labs, and they're well equipped ... most of the checks we see come from the blue boxes."

The group found that buyers use nail polish remover to erase the intended payee's name and the amount of the check, replacing the details with their own payee and amount, usually much higher than the original amount. A buyer may also use a fake ID to cash the check at a location such as Walmart.

"Organized crime groups, local gangs are figuring out there's nobody to stop them from doing this," the researcher said.

A Post review of Telegram channels dedicated to check fraud found posts advertising thousands of checks for sale across the United States. The payment amounts ranged from \$8 to a business check written out in the amount of more than \$36,000, while the checks themselves were on offer to potential buyers for upward of \$100, topping out at \$400 for business checks.

One Telegram seller offered USPS arrow keys for \$5,000 and \$7,000 to access mailboxes in Maryland and North Carolina. Another offered a Florida key for \$3,000. Several channel administrators said they accepted payment only in bitcoin or Cash App.

The price of the key, the Cybersecurity Research Group said, depends on the area the key is from and how many mailboxes it opens.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, responding to an inquiry from The Post, declined to give details about the scope of the problem: "In order to preserve the integrity of our investigations ... the U.S. Postal Inspection Service does not confirm, deny, or otherwise comment on the existence of its ongoing investigations."

The Post also asked the Postal Service how it was addressing the problem of stolen arrow keys. "We are continuing to address this issue but unable to provide details for security reasons," USPS spokesman Dave Partenheimer said.

The Postal Inspection Service offers rewards up to \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the suspects who robbed letter carriers. One wanted poster on the Postal Inspection Service website was for suspects involved in robberies that occurred between Nov. 3, 2021, and Jan. 31, 2022, in D.C., Prince George's County and Montgomery County. It says that postal property, including keys, were stolen.

Montgomery County Police Department Detective Kimberly Ann Pratt says thieves have long targeted residential mailboxes for checks, particularly during the Christmas season. Eight years ago, she said, the trend was for thieves to go early in the morning, look for raised red flags — which indicate there's outgoing mail in the box — steal the mail and look for checks.

Then in fall of 2020, police saw a shift, Pratt said: "It was no longer stealing checks from residential mailboxes but from big blue USPS mailboxes that sit on the corner. A lot of the mailboxes we saw were not getting pried, were not broken; the assumption was that they were obtaining keys to get into the blue boxes."

She said from fall of 2020 to now, Montgomery County police have recorded hundreds of reported incidents of mail theft. The areas hit most have been Bethesda, Potomac and Chevy Chase. Though police couldn't say why these areas are being targeted, they are among the wealthiest suburbs in the D.C. region.

Pratt said sometimes the bank catches the stolen check or the vendor does, if it doesn't receive a payment. The majority of the time, she said, it's the customer who notices. She said Montgomery County police are working with postal inspectors on a "large-scale investigation" but declined to give details.

The Postal Inspection Service, the law enforcement arm of the Postal Service, said in an email to The Post that it is working with local, county, state and federal law enforcement to combat mail theft.

It advised customers to hand outgoing mail to their carrier or mail it at the post office; ask their bank for "secure" checks that are more difficult to alter; and report stolen mail by calling 877-876-2455.

The criminal market for checks is thriving, and the blue mailboxes in Steve Rosen's Zip code — Chevy Chase's 20815, where census data shows the median home value is \$1,012,700 — appear to be compromised. The Cybersecurity Research Group showed The Post a photo it found online of four checks for sale, all from 20815 and dated Feb. 10-12. Two of the victims had no idea their checks had gone missing.

"That's really shocking," Susanna F. Fischer, 60, said when informed of her check seen for sale online.

Fischer, a law professor at Catholic University, had put the check for \$100 in a blue mailbox near her home as a gift to her niece for her 27th birthday. "She said she didn't receive it, so I thought maybe I didn't send it," she said. "I did not think that it could have been stolen."

Also in February, Sarah A. Friedman, 48, dropped a check in a blue mailbox to pay a credit card bill. When told about it being for sale on the Internet, she said, "I was going to check on that because I had gotten a late notice, and I knew it was paid on time."

In Rosen's case, the two stolen checks were made out to random people, and in both cases the bank restored the money to his account. He says now he doesn't mail checks, opting instead to pay electronically. He is infuriated that he can no longer rely on the mail.

"It's a pretty big insult to local citizenry to have s--t stolen from the mail like that. Is that what the Postal Service has come to — that we can't mail checks anymore? And the answer is 'yes,' " Rosen said.

Meanwhile, the Cybersecurity Research Group researcher — who uses fake "sock puppet" accounts to delve into and research this criminal underworld — also has become a target.

On the day The Post first interviewed the researcher, someone sent him a message on his phone saying they know where he lives, then sent him his Social Security number and address. He spent the next week freezing his credit and putting fraud alerts on all his accounts. He has had police and security surveillance outside his home, paid for by his employer, since then.

	Despite these efforts, on April 5 he received by mail a debit card for a Citibank checking account that someone had opened in his name.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Motive of federal agent imposters unclear</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-v/2022/04/30/ake-federal-agents-navy-yard-dc/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-v/2022/04/30/ake-federal-agents-navy-yard-dc/</a>
GIST	<p>The two men swaggered around the building, residents recall, boasting of being federal agents as if they were another amenity at the Crossing, a luxury apartment complex on the District's waterfront with a wellness center in its basement and an infinity pool on its roof.</p> <p>Arian Taherzadeh, who worked alongside a man named Haider Ali, patrolled the lobby when unwanted guests wandered inside and, prosecutors and residents say, advertised that his important law enforcement job earned him free rent in the high rise home to high-powered D.C. lawyers, U.S. Secret Service agents and others connected to the military.</p> <p>One day in January, when a resident posted a picture on the apartment Facebook page showing that a parking ticket machine in the garage had been smashed, Taherzadeh responded with seeming authority: "It was committed by a guest of a resident in the building. All parties are known."</p> <p>Taherzadeh, according to prosecutors, apparently gained access to the apartment building's security system and kept a binder with names of occupants and their contact information.</p> <p>But earlier this month, when FBI agents dressed in ballistic vests and armed with rifles streamed into building, residents of the Crossing began to realize they were living among alleged posers, not protectors. Prosecutors charged Taherzadeh and Ali with impersonating federal law enforcement and accused them of lavishing gifts on real agents who lived in the D.C. apartment building — including one officer assigned to protect the first lady. Authorities said they seized a stockpile of firearms, ammunition, police gear, surveillance equipment and identification cards after searching apartments Taherzadeh rented through a private security company.</p> <p>Now, as the government investigates whether the men may have bribed members of the Secret Service who lived in the building and threatened national security, questions still remain over the motive behind the alleged ruse.</p> <p>The Crossing, in messages to residents, say they "charged market-rate rents for all apartments" and never "requested, engaged, contracted, or paid either of those individuals to perform services of any kind at the building." Representatives of the apartment complex repeatedly denied interview requests.</p> <p>The Post interviewed several people who lived in buildings with Taherzadeh, both at the Crossing and another complex in D.C., and reviewed court documents outlining allegations against the two men. Residents spoke on the condition of anonymity because they feared for their safety.</p> <p>Taherzadeh, 40, and Ali, 35, have been on home detention after a federal judge released them earlier this month, saying that prosecutors "proffered zero evidence the defendants intended to infiltrate the Secret Service for a nefarious purpose, or even that they specifically targeted the Secret Service."</p> <p>Reached by phone April 19, Taherzadeh declined to comment, as did his attorney. In court documents, the attorneys deny a scheme to infiltrate the Secret Service as the government has alleged. In an interview, Ali's lawyer Gregory Smith said "the facts haven't matched the rhetoric so far."</p> <p>The Secret Service put four employees connected to the case on leave, though the FBI characterized them in court papers as witnesses who seemed to have been duped by a well-executed ploy.</p> <p>As it turns out, according to court documents and interviews with those who previously lived in a building with Taherzadeh, the Secret Service was not the first who said they were fooled. Lawsuits assert that</p>

Taherzadeh through his companies had not paid rent at two other luxury apartment buildings in the District. A possible pattern of deception, it appears, was at least three years old.

**‘We chased him for years’**

It was the summer of 2020, the height of the pandemic, and two men were drinking on the roof of the Carver Apartments in Northwest Washington. The friends, who had met a few months prior, nursed vodka Red Bull and beer.

It seemed like a relatively standard night until Taherzadeh needed a refill and invited his friend, who spoke on the condition of anonymity over safety concerns, down to his apartment. Inside, the friend said he saw rows of computer screens flashing live security footage from inside and outside their building. Rifles, pistols and tactical gear were stored in cases around the living room.

Taherzadeh had told the friend that he worked for the Department of Homeland Security and investigated gang violence, and the friend had noticed him walking around the building with a 9mm gun strapped to his waist. One night that summer, when racial justice protests following the police killing of George Floyd turned especially violent in the District, the friend said Taherzadeh stood atop the apartment in tactical gear with binoculars, apparently keeping an eye on the city.

The friend said the sheer extent of police and surveillance equipment in Taherzadeh’s apartment was staggering, but it didn’t surprise him. He said he left that night feeling like he had real insight into the life of a federal agent. He said he returned to Taherzadeh’s apartment later that summer and fired an air-soft pellet gun at the wall.

The setup with police gear, security equipment and surveillance technology observed by the friend is similar to what FBI agents would later describe in a criminal affidavit charging Taherzadeh and Ali while they lived at the Crossing. The men were often seen in areas of both buildings at times they were supposed to be off limits to residents, according to those who lived in the apartment complexes.

Court records show Taherzadeh’s security company leased three apartments at the Carver starting in fall 2019. The company failed to pay rent on any of the units, according to a lawsuit filed in April 2020 by Carver’s management, and a judge ordered the company to pay more than \$145,000 in back rent and fees and rent through the end of the contract.

In a statement, a lawyer for Carver’s management company said D.C.’s “restrictive regulations” prevented the complex from taking over apartments when rent was not paid, which “basically provided free housing to these people for over nine months.” No attorney was listed in court documents for the technology company or Taherzadeh.

Other lawsuits accused Taherzadeh’s companies of similar failed rent payments. Together, they paint a picture of a man who has left behind him a trail of creditors and lawyers, jumping from one apartment complex to another.

“We chased him for years,” attorney Thomas A. Mauro told The Washington Post shortly after the men were arrested. Mauro represents One Hill South, luxury apartments on the Southwest Washington waterfront, where Taherzadeh rented two penthouses in 2018 through a technology company he said he ran at the time. The residences together rented for slightly less than \$10,000 per month.

Mauro said Taherzadeh presented himself as the company president and offered tax returns that showed a monthly income of \$70,000. The complex owners said he failed to pay rent and sued him for more than \$63,000 in payments. The case is still active.

By the time he left One Hill South, Taherzadeh was running a security company called USSP, which he often referred to as the United States Special Police. He used that name to rent apartments at the Carver, and then again a year later in 2020 at the Crossing, where he listed the United States Special Police as the occupant of at least one of the units, according to court filings. The owners of the Crossing in July 2021

took Taherzadeh's company to court, saying it had failed to pay for apartments that ranged in rent from \$2,300 to nearly \$5,300 a month. The building owners won a nearly \$223,000 judgment.

No attorney was entered for any of the defendants in the three lawsuits.

The United States Special Police has several different addresses and people on its board, according to leases and corporate records. In the Crossing lawsuit, the company is listed as occupying an office on Pennsylvania Avenue, six blocks from the White House and a brisk 10-minute walk to the State Department. But on an early April visit after the police raid, there was no apparent evidence of a United States Special Police office, and a receptionist said she'd never heard of the company.

The Crossing lease also lists a man named Kevin Fuller as associated with the United States Special Police. Prosecutors said in court documents that Ali referred to Fuller as his direct supervisor but Taherzadeh later admitted during questioning after his arrest that Fuller is a "false and fictitious person."

#### **'Out of control'**

As far back as 2018, D.C. police had concerns about the United States Special Police, according to prosecutors. When Taherzadeh applied to the District to register the company, the city government expressed worry that the name risked "conveying false authority" by appearing to be federal law enforcement.

They required that he use "USSP" instead, according to federal court documents.

A year later, the city denied his application to be an armed special police officer, prosecutors said, citing a prior domestic violence conviction in Virginia. D.C. police granted him a license as an unarmed special police officer — which is basically a security guard with arrest powers at designated properties, per D.C. police and court filings — in 2020.

Taherzadeh later admitted to law enforcement that his company's name was an "embarrassing misrepresentation that got out of control," according to court documents filed by his defense.

Ali's attorney said Taherzadeh hired his client as an employee for the United States Special Police, which Ali believed contracted with the government. In letters to the federal judge, members of Ali's family who reside in the region described him as a "devoted father" who is not "a danger to anyone." Prosecutors were initially concerned about trips Ali had made overseas but later backed away from those allegations.

Prosecutors now fear the men used the company as part of a scheme to ingratiate themselves with real members of the U.S. Secret Service at the Crossing.

Inside the high rise on First Street, according to prosecutors, Taherzadeh carried a firearm, flashed a special police officer badge, snapped selfies in tactical equipment and even once was seen interacting with a D.C. police officer while wearing homeland security gear. He also grew close to real federal agents in the building, according to prosecutors, and began to offer them lavish gifts.

Taherzadeh, according to authorities, offered a Secret Service agent assigned to protection detail of first lady Jill Biden several items. He gave the agent a holster for a handgun, offered the use of an assault rifle worth \$2,000, and once loaned the agent's wife a purported government vehicle and gave her a generator, according to prosecutors.

Taherzadeh also befriended two agents assigned to protect the White House complex. Authorities said he gave one of them a drone, a gun locker and a rent-free apartment for a year worth more than \$48,000 — saying Homeland Security Investigations had approved extra rooms as part of his operations. Prosecutors said he gave the other agent a penthouse apartment valued upward of \$40,000 for about a year.

"It concerns us, the types of devices and favors that were given, and whether any may have been bribes," Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua S. Rothstein said in asking that the men remain jailed pending trial.

An amended affidavit released April 19 revealed more allegations against Taherzadeh and Ali. During their years at the Crossing, prosecutors said the self-advertised agents also recruited a Marine veteran to be “deputized” through D.C. police as a special police officer. Taherzadeh administered two urine tests and a fingerprint test, and Ali took him to a firearms range in Maryland as part of the “recruitment process,” according to prosecutors. The unnamed recruit went into D.C. police’s headquarters twice last summer — once upon instruction from Taherzadeh, and once accompanied by Ali — but did not appear to receive the license, according to the criminal affidavit.

Federal prosecutors said their alleged scheme was exposed in March in the simplest of ways. A postal inspector investigating an assault on a mail carrier at the building heard Taherzadeh and Ali had witnessed the attack and had been representing themselves to tenants as agents with the Department of Homeland Security.

He passed on the information to the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of the Inspector General, which referred it to the FBI. Soon enough, a squad of heavily armed federal agents interrupted afternoon coffee hour at the Crossing.

In their apartments, authorities said they found a cache of police equipment that included everything from handguns to a sledgehammer to police parking placards to a machine that creates and programs cards that can be used to access government facilities. Taherzadeh later turned in an assault rifle he said he stored in Virginia and registered in 2018.

Taherzadeh and Ali were arrested at a restaurant April 6.

Weeks into the investigation, it remains unclear what, if anything, the men wanted from the federal agents in exchange for their gifts. Both have pleaded not guilty. Taherzadeh said he had “no intention of compromising any federal agent” and acted out of a “desire for friendship”; while Ali said he had gotten carried away in a scheme he did not fully understand and believed he was working for a legitimate security company, according to documents filed by their defense attorneys in federal court.

The Secret Service has downplayed any risk to national security, but several former Secret Service officials stressed that the alleged ruse reveals vulnerabilities among employees who are supposed to be trained to spot scammers or spies but instead were apparently tricked.

Crossing management, in emails to residents, said they have since enlisted the help of an advisory firm with expertise in national security to recommend enhancements to their protocols. By late April, law enforcement were still trying to determine whether the men had compromised any other federal officials, while prosecutors warned that they were “not merely playing dress-up.”

Some residents of the Crossing, meanwhile, are furious. They said in interviews and on internal messaging boards that they are worried about their personal security and are considering legal action against the Crossing. They sought luxury and safety, they said, and instead allegedly lived among fake agents with real guns.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Ukraine: Russia looted museum artifacts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/ukraine-scythia-gold-museum-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/30/world/europe/ukraine-scythia-gold-museum-russia.html</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — The heist started when a mysterious man in a white lab coat showed up at the museum. A squad of Russian soldiers stood behind him, with guns, watching eagerly.</p> <p>Using long tweezers and special gloves, the man in the white coat carefully extracted scores of special gold artifacts more than 2,300 years old from cardboard boxes in the cellar of a museum in Melitopol, a southern town in Russian-occupied territory, Ukrainian officials said. The gold items were from the Scythian empire and dated back to the fourth century B.C.</p>



Then the mysterious expert, the Russian soldiers and the gold disappeared.

“The orcs have taken hold of our Scythian gold,” [declared Melitopol’s mayor, Ivan Fyodorov](#), using a derogatory term many Ukrainians reserve for Russian soldiers. “This is one of the largest and most expensive collections in Ukraine, and today we don’t know where they took it.”

This was hardly the first attack on Ukrainian culture since the war began.

In [Mariupol](#), the town that has been hammered for weeks by Russian forces, officials said that Russian agents broke into an art museum and stole masterpiece paintings, a famous sculpture and several highly valued Christian icons.

Across Ukraine, officials said, dozens of Orthodox churches, national monuments and cultural heritage sites have been destroyed. In one town near Kyiv, Borodianka, Russian soldiers shot the bust of a famous Ukrainian poet in the head.

On Saturday, Ukrainian officials said that more than 250 cultural institutions had been damaged or destroyed.

But perhaps no cultural heist has been as brazen as what unfolded in Melitopol just a few days ago.

According to Leila Ibrahimova, the director of the Melitopol Museum of Local History, the trouble started in late February, when Russian forces shelled the airport and took over the city. Soldiers went on a rampage, smashing into supermarkets, stores and homes.

Most of the city’s residents hid inside their houses. But a few museum workers, including Ms. Ibrahimova, made their way back to the museum.

It is an elegant, three-story, stone building in the old part of town, home to 50,000 exhibits, from Soviet-era medals to old battle axes. But its prized collection was a set of rare gold ornaments from [the Scythians](#), a nomadic people that founded a rich, powerful empire, centered in the Crimean Peninsula, that endured from around the eighth century B.C. to the second century A.D.

It was the Scythian gold that Ms. Ibrahimova was most worried about.

She and other staff members secretly hid it and some other historic artifacts in cardboard boxes, stashing the boxes in a dank cellar where they didn’t think anyone would find it.

“We knew that any second someone could come into the museum with a weapon,” she said. So they worked fast, she said, because “the collection is priceless.”

In mid-March, Ms. Ibrahimova said Russian troops burst into her house with assault rifles, threw a black hood over her head and kidnapped her. After several hours of intense questioning, they let her go. Two weeks later she left Melitopol for an area not under Russian control.

But on Wednesday, she received a call from a caretaker at the museum. The caretaker said Russian soldiers, along with intelligence officers and a Russian-speaking man in a white lab coat, had come to her house in the morning and ordered her, at gunpoint, to go with them to the museum.

They commanded her to take them to the Scythian gold.

The caretaker refused, Ms. Ibrahimova said. But the man in the white coat found the boxes anyway with the help of a Ukrainian, Evgeny Gorlachev, who was appointed by the Russian military as the museum’s new director, she said. A Russian crew filmed part of the robbery.

“We hid everything but somehow they found it,” she said.

What was stolen: at least 198 gold items, including ornaments in the form of flowers; gold plates; rare old weapons; 300-year-old silver coins; and special medals. She said many of the gold artifacts had been given to the Scythians by the Greeks.

In an interview on Russian television, Mr. Gorlachev said the gold artifacts “are of great cultural value for the entire former Soviet Union” and that the previous administrators of the museum “spent a lot of effort and energy” to hide them.

“For what purpose, no one knows,” he said. “But thanks to these people and the operational work carried out, residents of the city of Melitopol — and not only Melitopol — will be able to observe again a large collection of Scythian gold.” He did not say when or where the artifacts would be displayed.

Ms. Ibrahimova, who spoke by phone, sounded despondent as she spoke about the Russian invaders.

“Maybe culture is the enemy for them,” she said. “They said that Ukraine has no state, no history. They just want to destroy our country. I hope they will not succeed.”

Scythian gold has enormous symbolic value in Ukraine. Other collections of the artifacts had been stored in vaults in the capital, Kyiv, before the war broke out. But Ms. Ibrahimova said events unfolded too fast for her museum to spirit out their collection.

For years now, Ukraine has been locked [in a complicated dispute](#) with Russia over collections of Scythian gold that several museums in Crimea had lent to a museum in Amsterdam. After Russia seized Crimea in 2014, Ukraine pleaded with the Amsterdam museum not to return the gold. Russia demanded the museum do just that. A court has ruled in Ukraine’s favor and the gold remains in Amsterdam.

But historians said the looting of the artifacts in Melitopol is an even more egregious attempt to appropriate, and perhaps destroy, Ukraine’s cultural heritage.

“The Russians are making a war without rules,” said Oleksandr Symonenko, a fellow of Ukraine’s Archaeology Institute and a Scythian specialist. “This is not a war. It is destroying our life, our nature, our culture, our industry, everything. This is a crime.”

The caretaker who refused to help the Russians was released on Wednesday after the gold was stolen. But on Friday she was taken away from her house at gunpoint again, Ms. Ibrahimova said, shortly after the mayor, who is also in exile, announced the theft.

She has not been heard from since.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Jan 6 guilty plea: 2<sup>nd</sup> Oath Keeper</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/30/second-oath-keeper-charged-seditional-conspiracy-pleads-guilty/7491651345591/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/30/second-oath-keeper-charged-seditional-conspiracy-pleads-guilty/7491651345591/</a>
GIST	<p>April 30 (UPI) -- A second member of the Oath Keepers has pleaded guilty after he was charged with seditious conspiracy and other crimes for the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.</p> <p>Brian Ulrich, 44, of Guyton, Ga., pleaded guilty Friday to seditious conspiracy and obstruction of an official proceeding, the certification of President <a href="#">Joe Biden</a>'s election win, the Justice Department <a href="#">announced</a>.</p> <p>He is a member of the Georgia chapter of the Oath Keepers, a "large, but loosely organized" anti-government movement, "some of whom are associated with militias," according to the Justice Department.</p>

Ulrich [was among](#) 11 Oath Keepers, including the group's founder Elmer Stewart Rhodes III, indicted earlier this year in the District of Columbia on seditious conspiracy and other charges, related to the Capital breach.

He is the second of them to plead guilty to seditious conspiracy and obstruction of an official proceeding. Joshua James, a 34-year-old military veteran who led the group's Alabama chapter, [pleaded guilty](#) to the same charges last month.

Both Ulrich and James -- [from of Arab. Ala.](#) -- have agreed to cooperate with the government's ongoing investigation as part of their plea agreements.

The nine remaining defendants have pleaded not guilty.

Ulrich admitted as part of his guilty plea that he conspired for months with other Oath Keepers to obstruct "the transfer of presidential power," and they "were prepared to use force to stop the transfer of power," the Justice Department statement said.

The plotting included "encrypted and private communications," and gathering weapons, including "combat and tactical gear," according to the Justice Department statement.

The statement added that Ulrich and other Oath Keepers used a group chat application called "Signal" where he encouraged others in his chapter to join him in Washington, D.C.

"I seriously wonder what it would take just to get every patriot marching around the capital armed?" Ulrich questioned in "Signal" chat on Dec. 5, 2020, the statement noted.

Ulrich added that the point was "to show our government how powerless they are!"

In another chat, Ulrich messaged the group that a "Civil War" may be necessary if Biden became president.

"And if there's a Civil War then there's a Civil War," Ulrich added.

Ulrich breached a restricted area in military "stack" formation with hands on shoulders and tactical gear, and entered the Capital building at 3:22 p.m., the Justice Department statement said.

He was arrested on Aug. 9, 2021, in Guyton, Ga, and faces up to 20 years in prison for seditious conspiracy and up to 20 years for obstruction of an official proceeding, along with potential financial penalties. A sentencing date has not been scheduled yet.

Since Jan. 6, 2021, nearly 800 individuals have been arrested nationwide for crimes related to the Capitol breach, including over 250 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. Investigation remains ongoing.

Jon Schaffer, a founding lifetime member of the Oath Keepers, was not charged with seditious conspiracy, [but pleaded guilty last spring](#) to breaching the Capitol in a tactical vest armed with bear repellant, to obstruct Congress' certification of Biden's election win.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Judge upholds Maxwell conviction</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/30/federal-judge-declines-overturn-ghislaine-maxwell-conviction/2261651343753/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/30/federal-judge-declines-overturn-ghislaine-maxwell-conviction/2261651343753/</a>
GIST	April 30 (UPI) -- A federal judge has declined to overturn the conviction of Ghislaine Maxwell for her role in <a href="#">Jeffrey Epstein</a> 's sex trafficking scheme.

"The government at trial presented extensive witness testimony from multiple victim witnesses and others, as well as corroborating documentary and physical evidence," U.S. District Court Judge Alison Nathan ruled Friday.

"The testimony and other trial evidence established [Maxwell's] role in grooming and recruiting underage girls and using the cover of massage to perpetrate sexual abuse."

Maxwell, 60, was convicted by a jury in December on five of six counts after she was accused of procuring young girls to be sexually abused by Epstein.

Nathan upheld the conviction on three of the five counts, one of which was for violations of the Mann Act and another for violations of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Nathan said in court documents that Maxwell had been convicted on three other counts that violated the same statutes and would uphold just one of them, a small victory for the British socialite that could reduce her sentence during her sentencing hearing in June.

"This legal conclusion in no way calls into question the factual findings made by the jury," Nathan wrote in the opinion.

"Rather, it underscores that the jury unanimously found three times over that the [Maxwell] is guilty of conspiring with Epstein to entice, transport, and traffic underage girls for sexual abuse."

Maxwell had successfully argued in post-trial motions that judgement on those three "multiplicitous" charges would violate the Fifth Amendment's double-jeopardy clause.

Nathan ruled that there was sufficient evidence to find Maxwell guilty of transporting a minor, referred to as Jane, for sex even though the socialite did not travel with her.

Jane testified that, when she was 15, she had trouble getting on a commercial flight because she did not have proper identification and Maxwell "made it happen" by helping her get on the flight.

"Jane also testified that Maxwell was present on some occasions when Epstein sexually abused Jane in New York when she was under the age of 17," the opinion reads.

"The court concludes that this evidence, taken together, was sufficient for the jury to find beyond a reasonable doubt that [Maxwell] knowingly transported Jane to New York with the intent to engage in sexual activity illegal under New York law, or at minimum, aided and abetted Epstein in doing so."

Maxwell has been detained at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, a federal jail in Brooklyn, since her arrest. Before Nathan's opinion, she had faced up to 65 years in prison during her sentencing.

Earlier this month, Nathan [denied a request](#) by Maxwell for a new trial and said that a juror showed no bias during Maxwell's trial late last year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/01 Mississippi music festival: 5 shot, 1 killed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/at-least-one-killed-in-shooting-at-mississippi-mudbugs-festival?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/at-least-one-killed-in-shooting-at-mississippi-mudbugs-festival?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>At least one person is dead and four others wounded after gunfire erupted during the Mudbugs Festival at the Mississippi State Fairgrounds in Jackson late Saturday, local authorities said.</p> <p>In a late-night press briefing, Tyree Jones, the Hinds County sheriff, told reporters investigators were still working to figure out what exactly had led to the chaotic exchange of gunfire.</p> <p>But the fatality may have resulted from law enforcement returning fire, he said.</p>

“At some particular point, there were several shots fired from several individuals. We believe there were several shooters involved, at least five people have been shot. One of the individuals who was shot has been pronounced deceased at the scene,” he said.

He said an officer-involved shooting investigation had been launched in connection with the incident, because “we believe that one of the law enforcement personnel [at the scene] did discharge his weapon, and we believe at this particular time that the victim that is deceased is possibly due to the officer-involved shooting.”

The Mississippi Bureau of Investigations has now been called in to assist, he said.

“At this time, we do not know what the motive is, or exactly what happened,” he said, adding that two rifles, at least one pistol, and “a large magnitude of different caliber shell casings” were recovered at the scene.

Earlier, Jones had warned on Twitter that “several shooters” had opened fire and said “the investigation is being conducted as an active shooter situation.”

WLBT reported that all the rides at the fest were shut down following the gunfire, and guests forced to leave as police swarmed the area.

The Mudbug Festival is a five-day event featuring musical performances, fair rides and a crawfish boil. [American Idol winner Laine Hardy](#) had been slated to perform at the event but was bumped from the line-up after he was arrested Friday over allegations he bugged his ex-girlfriend's dorm room at Louisiana State University.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Alabama prison official, inmate missing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/alabama-prison-official-missing-after-escorting-inmate/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/alabama-prison-official-missing-after-escorting-inmate/</a>
GIST	<p>FLORENCE, Ala. (AP) — A prison official from Alabama is missing after escorting an inmate to a courthouse for a hearing.</p> <p>The Lauderdale County Sheriff’s Office said in a Facebook post Saturday that Assistant Director of Corrections Vicky White disappeared while escorting an inmate being held on capital murder charges. The inmate is also missing.</p> <p>On Saturday morning, Sheriff Rick Singleton confirmed the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, FBI, and U.S. Marshals are assisting in the investigation.</p> <p>White, 56, who’s been with the department for 16 years, left the detention center with inmate Casey White on Friday morning and neither has been seen since. The pair are not related. The vehicle they were traveling in when they left the detention center was discovered at a nearby shopping center parking lot, according to the sheriff’s office.</p> <p>White, 38, was being held on capital murder charges in the 2015 death of Connie Ridgeway. He confessed to the slaying in 2020 while in state prison for other crimes, WHNT-TV reported.</p> <p>At a news conference Friday, Singleton said Vicky White, armed with a 9mm, left the detention center with the inmate around 9:41 a.m. headed to the courthouse for what she said was a mental health evaluation for Casey. She was alone with the inmate, which the sheriff said was in direct violation of department policy.</p> <p>“Our policy is for any inmate with those kinds of charges to have two sworn deputies escort them. And that did not happen,” Singleton said.</p>

	<p>Singleton also said there was no mental health evaluation for the inmate scheduled at the courthouse.</p> <p>White also told co-workers she had a doctor's appointment scheduled, which was confirmed but the office said the deputy never showed.</p> <p>Officials said no one realized the two were missing until 3:30 p.m. on Friday. Deputies tried to contact Vicky White but her phone repeatedly went to voicemail.</p> <p>Singleton said his department was "aggressively investigating" the incident and would be looking into previous interaction between the two to "see if something else was going on."</p> <p>Singleton said his department was "shocked" and that it was obviously a possibility that the corrections officer helped him escape. Singleton told news outlets that Vicky White had turned in her retirement papers the day before she went missing.</p> <p>Regardless of her involvement, the sheriff acknowledged she could very well be in danger.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/30 Teen escapes juvenile detention; captured</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/15-year-old-captured-after-escaping-from-juvenile-detention-center-near-kittitas">https://komonews.com/news/local/15-year-old-captured-after-escaping-from-juvenile-detention-center-near-kittitas</a>
GIST	<p>KITTITAS COUNTY, Wash. - Kittitas County officials say a 15-year-old has been captured after he reportedly threatened a staff member and drove off in her car from the Parke Creek Community Facility, a juvenile group detention center near Kittitas.</p> <p>The staff member says on Friday, just before 8 p.m., the 15-year-old boy choked her from behind and demanded her keys, before driving off from the detention center.</p> <p>Kittitas County Sheriff's deputies say they spotted the stolen car driving west toward Ellensburg from the group home. They pursued the car for 10 miles into the city of Ellensburg at which point, deputies decided it would be too great a risk to the public to continue the pursuit. During the pursuit, deputies say the 15-year-old drove at speeds of 80 mph, drove into oncoming traffic, and through a ditch to avoid spike strips.</p> <p>Washington State Troopers then spotted the 15-year-old driving south on State Route 97 west of Ellensburg around 9 p.m. Ellensburg Police Officers deployed spike strips and punctured both front tires.</p> <p>The 15-year-old was taken into custody for Escape, Assault, Theft of a Motor Vehicle, and Eluding.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Murder trial for Auburn officer postponed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/murder-trial-for-auburn-police-officer-postponed-victims-family-protests-delay">https://www.q13fox.com/news/murder-trial-for-auburn-police-officer-postponed-victims-family-protests-delay</a>
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. - A King County judge said Friday that the <a href="#">murder trial of a suburban Seattle police officer</a> will be delayed again.</p> <p>Superior Court Judge Nicole Gaines Phelps said Friday a heavy caseload and the resolution of complex legal issues involved in Auburn police officer Jeff Nelson's trial have forced the court to abandon a late June trial date, The Seattle Times <a href="#">reported</a>.</p> <p>Phelps said <a href="#">a new trial date will be set next week</a> in what will be the first test of a new state statute on police use of deadly force.</p> <p>The judge said she hopes the case can be rescheduled in September but concedes it could be pushed into 2023, more than three-and-a-half years after Jesse Sarey was killed.</p>



	<p>The <a href="#">judge's statement prompted a plea by Elaine Simons, Sarey's foster mother</a>, who said the family has been patiently waiting for resolution and justice.</p> <p>"We've been waiting 18 months," Simons said in court. "This is a real hardship for the family. The public has been waiting for this trial."</p> <p>Nelson, who joined the Auburn Police department in 2008, <a href="#">shot and killed 26-year-old Sarey outside a convenience store in 2019</a> while trying to arrest him for disorderly conduct in an interaction that lasted just 67 seconds.</p> <p>Nelson has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder and assault.</p> <p>The case was the first filed against an officer since voters in <a href="#">Washington passed legislation in 2019</a>, which was amended by the Legislature, that makes it easier to prosecute police for using deadly force.</p> <p>Previously, prosecutors had to prove the officer acted with malice — an almost impossible standard, and one no other state had. Under the new law, prosecutors must demonstrate that another officer acting reasonably would not have found deadly force necessary.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

HEADLINE	<b>04/29 Police investigate L&amp;I equipment theft</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/hard-drives-and-equipment-stolen-from-li-in-tukwila-investigation-underway">https://www.q13fox.com/news/hard-drives-and-equipment-stolen-from-li-in-tukwila-investigation-underway</a>
GIST	<p><b>TUKWILA, Wash.</b> - Police are investigating a recent burglary at a Washington State <a href="#">Department of Labor Industries</a> (L&amp;I) office, where equipment containing sensitive personal identifiable information was stolen.</p> <p>According to a Friday statement from the L&amp;I regional office in <a href="#">Tukwila</a>, computer hard drives, laptops, cellphones, office equipment, door access key cards, gas cards and other items were stolen in a burglary on March 28. L&amp;I says the hard drives may contain personally identifiable information including social security numbers, financial account numbers, email addresses and passwords, dates of birth and health insurance information.</p> <p>L&amp;I's Tukwila office says that people who have had business with their regional office, employees and other dependents could be impacted. However, there is no indication that the hard drives or any of the information on them has been used in any way.</p> <p>L&amp;I has taken several precautionary steps; they have notified the State Office of the Attorney General, activated a call center to answer questions and provide resources to people who may be involved.</p> <p><i>"We know how concerning it can be when your information may have been improperly accessed," said Steve Reinmuth, L&amp;I Assistant Director for Field Services and Public Safety. "We're making it a priority to investigate this and notify the public. We're also setting up help for those who may need it."</i></p> <p>The agency is also offering free credit monitoring to those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have Filed a complaint, question, or other form with the L&amp;I Tukwila office</li> <li>• Have had involvement as a witness or subject of a case with the L&amp;I Tukwila office</li> <li>• Have had involvement as an employer or employee in a claim made to the L&amp;I Tukwila office</li> <li>• Are or recently have been an employee or dependent of an employee based in, or whose supervisor is based in, the L&amp;I Tukwila office</li> <li>• Have had other business with the L&amp;I Tukwila office</li> </ul> <p>The call center's phone number is 1-833-940-2302. Call center hours are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekdays, excluding federal holidays.</p>

	The office is back to normal operation with additional security protocols in place.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	

**Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.**

**If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to [intake@wsfc.wa.gov](mailto:intake@wsfc.wa.gov) and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.**

**DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.**

**FAIR USE Notice** All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: [<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)